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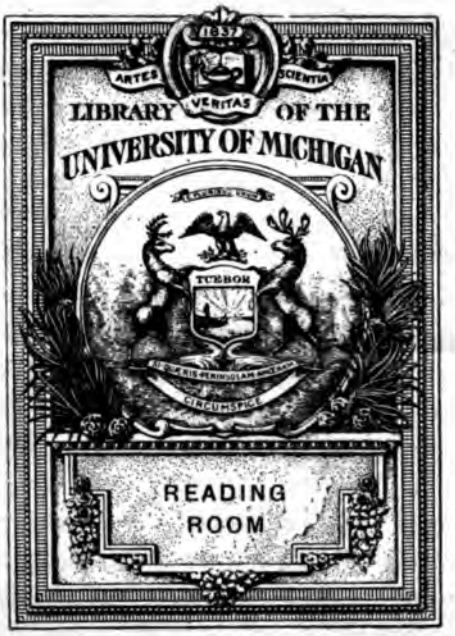
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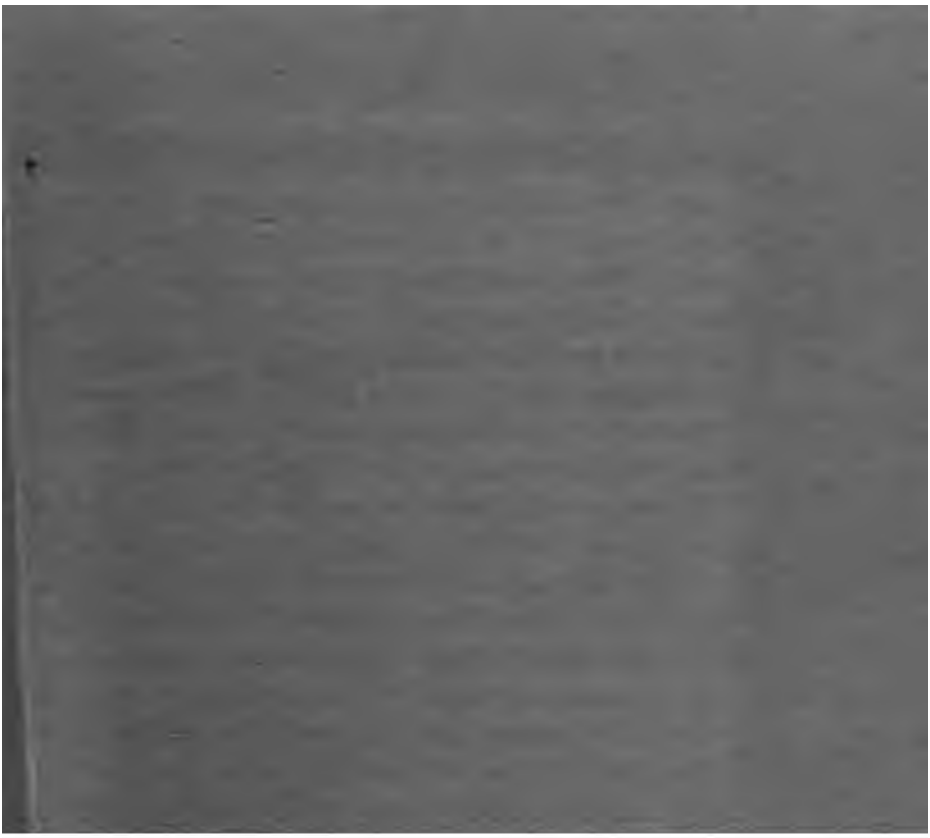

POPULAR EDITION—TWO VOLUMES IN ONE

AMERICAN LITERATURE

1607-1885

I.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN THOUGHT

II.

AMERICAN POETRY AND FICTION

BY

CHARLES F. RICHARDSON

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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INTRODUCTION.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF AMERICAN LITERATURE.

No critical task is more difficult and delicate than that of estimating the rank and analyzing the achievements of American authors. The student of the classical literature of Greece and Rome finds himself, notwithstanding the controversies of scholars, on well-defined ground, with all of which he can familiarize himself, and on which he can work in accordance with clear laws of criticism, unhindered by contemporary prejudice and error. He who takes up the history of some of the living literatures of the world, such as French, or Spanish, or German, or English, or Italian, can consider, if he will, the literary records of past times alone, not venturing upon dangerous questions affecting living authors. The reader of Russian or Norwegian books, which have, indeed, fewer predecessors in past centuries, has the advantage to be derived from the study of works which are closely related to the life and character of somewhat peculiar and isolated peoples, whose output can advantageously be considered by any contemporary foreigner.

In the case of our own literature the situation is different. In the first place, it may be noted that

no language and literature save the English has ever put forth a commanding offshoot without essential change of form and character, and yet existing under peculiar conditions. Dickens can be read with no difficulty on the sand-lots of San Francisco; and Bret Harte, in turn, is almost our most popular author on the railway stalls of England. The language is practically identical in Britain and America, and the literatures are mutually influential. It is not always easy to say where one begins and the other ends. The English critic feels entirely competent, therefore, to criticise American literature; and the French or German writer who knows English deems it quite within his province to write on any American theme. And yet this very similarity or identity is confusing and misleading. Wherein our literature really differs from English literature, and wherein it is but a branch bearing the same fruit in a different corner of the inclosure,—these are questions demanding the utmost care on the critic's part.

In considering American literature, therefore, we cannot safely say that the judgment of foreigners is the judgment of posterity. The most intelligent Europeans often make the most startling mistakes concerning literary matters here. Victor Hugo declared, without hesitation, that Poe was "the prince of American literature," and yet, it is said, professed entire ignorance of Emerson's name when it was mentioned to him. Bret Harte, Mark Twain, and other humorists are deemed by many our most characteristic writers, while other critics

aver that Joaquin Miller is a truer representative of the life of this country, and still others insist that we really have no *American* poet save Whitman. The earlier English critics raised Longfellow to a pinnacle of fame ; some later ones dismiss him as "the poet of the commonplace,"—an educated gentleman, who made fair translations and neatly copied foreign models for the home public of the less cultured order. In Longfellow's case, praise has been followed by blame ; but some recent English over-praise of American work—especially in fiction—is scarcely less to be deplored than the former sharp criticisms. Once Sydney Smith made his hackneyed query, John Keats dismissed all American books as worthless, and Southey could find here nothing to praise but Mrs. Brooks' "Zophiel ; or, The Bride of Seven." Now London and Paris and Berlin journals are telling us that our stories are the best in the world, and that this or that new American novel is sure of a prominent place in the literature of the language. We knew that the old denouncers were wrong ; let us not be too sure that the later praisers are right. Both fall into a fatal error of perspective. The first thought that no good thing could come from the American Nazareth, because it was beyond the line of possible productiveness. The last declare, with the French critics, that to tell a story well is the utmost reach of literary endeavor ; or else maintain that no American literature is characteristic which is not new and striking when measured by European standards. In a word, foreign criticism of

American literature is, with all its ability, discernment, and appreciation, too often limited in view, bound by the modern fondness for neat fiction-mongering, or dazzled by unfamiliar forms of verse or jest. It does not help us in the matter of literary perspective. We dare not rely upon it for a just description of our works and ways. The critic of American literature should be thoroughly acquainted with both English and American political, social, and literary history; should perceive clearly that in England and America is a dominant and assimilating Saxon folk, working out a similar problem on similar lines; and yet should discriminate between variant conditions, aims, methods, and results. It is not too much to say that no foreign historian of our literature has shown himself possessed of all these qualifications.

In American criticism of American literature, it is surely not less necessary that a true perspective be attained, if possible. How shall it be reached, without much aid from past centuries so far as our point of view is concerned; without material assistance, save in minor matters, from foreign essayists; and with a constantly changing army of writers, quite crowding our literary field, and winning a hurried praise that is soon, perhaps, to change to equally unjust blame?

The point of view of American literature *must* include living authors. What account of our writers could omit Lowell, Holmes, Whittier, Bancroft, or, indeed, Whitman and James? Could a critic, viewing our literary products in 1876, omit consideration

of Bryant, Emerson, and Longfellow? Our literature is practically about eighty years old; any study of it is a study of living writers, in large measure. This necessity is simply to be accepted at the outset. We must read and study books by authors living as well as by authors dead; by those whose best works may be in the future, by those whose methods and achievements may be modified hereafter. We must also recognize the fact that contemporary opinion is sadly fallible, that celebrities are dethroned in the passage of years, and that obscurities are brought into clear and lasting light. Between these two duties it is by no means easy to go. "*Incidis in Scyllam, cupiens vitare Charybdim.*" The Scylla of American literary criticism is the temptation to be prematurely confident that a writer is for all time; the Charybdis is the refusal to praise Lowell and Whittier, where they deserve praise, because they are still alive. Between these rocks the critic too often goes to ruin. Poe struck on both of them; he attacked Longfellow, derided Lowell, and patronized Hawthorne, reserving his praises for writers possessing the prime merit, in his view, of being Southerners or sentimentalists. And yet Poe honestly tried, in his day, to write criticisms which should be unbiased by current verdicts, and should be based on his own investigations. He failed because he lacked the wide learning, the clear insight, and the just temper which the true critic must have.

Applying well-known laws of criticism to the subject in hand, the critic of an American book or author, whether that critic be an American or a

foreigner, and whether he be considering past writings or contemporary ones, should try to answer these questions: What did the author aim to do? what method did he adopt? under what conditions did he work? what were his relations to previous writers on this side of the Atlantic? what his debt to English literature? what his obligations to, and his influence upon, his fellow-authors? what his intrinsic success? what his probable rank in the future? In the case of writers no longer living, or in advanced life, he can also ask concerning their influence upon literature here and elsewhere, and the effect of time upon their reputations.

Acting honestly upon this obvious method, and remembering the special environment of American men of letters, and also their heritage in English literature, the critic can properly venture to express an opinion concerning his predecessors and his contemporaries. That he will sometimes fail is unquestionable; but critics of Hebrew or Greek or Roman literature have failed after twenty centuries of accumulated wisdom. Critical failure depends, after all, upon lacks in the critic's standpoint and intellectual equipment, quite as much as upon his place in time, as regards the subjects of his criticism. By him who studiously sets before himself the questions mentioned, conclusions may be reached in an author's lifetime as truly, if not as confidently, as after that author's death. Foolish "patriotism," local pride, the influence of popular enthusiasm and prejudice, resentment of foreign blame, delight at foreign praise,—these things cannot endure in the clear light of true criticism.

It seems necessary to illustrate by examples. Thirty years ago, Washington Irving was still living, honored and read by all, and often placed at the head of our literature. But it was as evident then as now that Irving could do some things and could not do others; that as an essayist he was master of a clear and beautiful style, fairly to be compared with Lamb's, or even with Addison's; that the "Sketch-Book" was not likely to lose its place among classic English works; that Irving was a genuine humorist, though sometimes coarse or tiresome; that he could tell a story gracefully; that the "Life of Washington" was not likely to be superseded, but might be; and that, as biographer and historian, Irving failed because he lacked familiarity with the sounder and deeper method. The critic in 1854, then, might safely say, as he does to-day, that Irving stands in the fore-front of American literature, but not at the head of our prose-writers. The debt of American literature to the man who first gave us a European reputation in letters was as binding and as apparent then as now. Turning to others composing what the late J. R. Dennett called the "Knickerbocker School," could not a discerning student perceive, fifty years ago, that Paulding's writings bore no promise of lasting renown; that Drake, a poet clearly of a third-rate order, had, nevertheless, proved that poetry pure and simple could be written here; and that Halleck's two lyrics would always give him a good place in the anthologies, while his doggerel humor and his "fine writing" would go the way of all similar productions?

The same foresight could have been applied to our early poetry. It was Bryant's good fortune, which he sometimes resented, to write his most popular poem in early youth. I think his sagest readers felt it in 1817, as they do now, that "Thanatopsis" is one of the best modern pieces in blank verse—the most difficult of metres; that its tone and expression are high, and true so far as they go; and that its defects are of a negative order. When Bryant was fifty years old he had proved that he was sometimes as good a poet as Wordsworth, but that he could by no means attain to Wordsworth's serenest heights. To have claimed for Bryant the highest place in our poetry would have been idle; for he lacked fire, breadth of view, wide sympathy with human nature, and what Hawthorne, speaking of Jones Very, called "a sense of the ludicrous." What could have been claimed for him, is now paid him as his due: the rank of a poet of lofty thought, austere mind, and commanding expression in his own field. Longfellow came, in his early life, to that position which he is not likely to lose,—the place of the poet of sympathy and feeling. Careful readers knew, in the days of "Souvenirs" and "Keepsakes," as they know now, that Longfellow's poems would endure, while time would bury the writings of N. P. Willis, and Mrs. Osgood, and "Maria del Occidente," and the rest who tried to succeed in the same work. When Longfellow showed what could be done in hexameter and trochaic tetrameter, gave us our nearest approach to an American epic, and chronicled old Acadian and New England days in fit verse, he proved that the

spirit of poetry could find native themes, and could put them into new forms on this side the water. There has been no time since Longfellow began to write when his position has not been secure; and it is not now, as it has not been in the past, jeopardized by his occasional flatness, prosiness, and prolixity. Emerson, in old age, said that he could not read all Longfellow wrote,—he "wrote too much"; but the same Emerson, at Longfellow's funeral, remembered him as a "sweet and noble soul," though the dying sage had forgotten the very name of the dead singer. The critic may admit Longfellow's faults; but many an orphic, or intense, or cosmic, or Browningesque poet may well envy Longfellow's fame. It needs no future century to point out both the faults and the fame. The same may be said of Poe. If we go to Poe for what he cannot furnish, we shall be disappointed. He has no answer to life's problems, no help for life's struggle, no strong conception of ethics or faith; he merely gives us weird fancies and sweetly melodious music, at times rising, as in "Annabel Lee" and "To One in Paradise," to half-religious heights. He is not the "prince of American literature," for princes govern as well as dazzle; but he is one of the world's men of genius. Will all this be more evident, or less, a century hence?

It seems to me that the value and the substantial accuracy of contemporary criticism of the higher order have been illustrated in the case of Emerson. There was not a little that was extravagant, or ephemeral, or valueless, or broadly farcical, in the Transcendental movement of 1840. But even in the

midst of that period of "storm and stress," and of simmer and sputter, Emerson saw the follies of his associates, and avoided the most glaring of them, while Hawthorne, on a serener height of common-sense, perceived Emerson's mistakes. As the years have gone by, intelligent critics estimate Emerson with substantial fairness. The period of adulation has not yet passed, it is true; but, after all, do we not know what Emerson was and was not, what he did and could not do, and what is the essential value of his prose and of his verse? Emerson the optimist, the stimulating force, the developer of the individual, the deep and true poet, the seer, we know and feel; and yet we can see not the less clearly his inconsistencies, his inferiority to Carlyle in Hebrew-like sense of Jehovah's might, his obscurities of style, his real narrowness of view when he renounced all religious forms. On the whole, the sager contemporary readers know and judge Emerson, Thoreau Alcott, Margaret Fuller, as they ought to be known and judged.

That there is a difficulty in criticising, during the authors' lifetime, the works of such winsome personalities as Whittier and Holmes, is unquestionable. But is it too soon to say that Whittier, at his best, is high and noble; or that "Snow-Bound" is a characteristic descriptive poem of New England, and seems sure to live? No recognition of his bad rhymes, incorrect pronunciations, or occasional tediousness and thinness need hinder such an expression of opinion. And Holmes and Lowell know in what they have succeeded and in what failed; in the works

of the latter the merits and demerits are so plain, that if the reader were to take his Lowell from the shelf, and mark these merits and demerits, from the first page to the last, from the Tennysonian echoes to "The Cathedral" and the "Commemoration Ode," I have no doubt that their writer would substantially agree with the criticisms made.

I need not speak here of other poets. In the case of Whitman, there is, of course, no agreement as yet. When one critio regards him as a Homer-Shakespeare, with improvements, and another deems him an impostor in the garb of a poet, it is not easy to make a compromise. Much contemporary criticism of Whitman, whether praise or blame, is valueless. The poet arouses undue adulation and unjust contempt. Certainly, however, we may claim that the criticism of Whitman by the best American minds is likely to be approved by the literary historians of the future, in comparison with that expressed by not a few foreigners of high intelligence. In regard to the perspective of American literature, it must never be forgotten that deck-hands, 'longshoremen, and stage-drivers, Californian miners, Chinese, highway robbers, buffaloes, and Indians are but a part of our civilization, and that literature *may* concern itself with such themes as God, duty, culture, and Eastern lakes or rivers, and still be distinctively American.

A German gentleman, an intelligent reader, for many years a resident of Boston, once expressed to me the opinion that Hawthorne is, perhaps, the greatest writer of this century, and that our historians are the equals of any who have written in Europe;

beyond this he was hardly ready to make many claims for our literature. I substantially agree with him in these expressions, though I would not stop with them. It is true, however, that American literature should stand firmly on its own ground, making no claims on the score of patriotism, or youth, or disadvantageous circumstances, or *bizarre* achievement, but gravely pointing to what has been done. It is better to offer to the world, self-respectingly and silently, Emerson, Longfellow, Motley, Bancroft, Irving, Ticknor, Poe, and Hawthorne, in their several works and ways. These stand for themselves; their place is assured, and we have no need to assert their claims with vociferousness or exaggeration.

If honest, searching, and dispassionate criticism of American literature is needed in considering the work and rank of authors of the present century,—who have chiefly given that literature its place in the world's estimation,—it is no less needed in studying our writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. American literature in the colonial period was in its day of small things, promising indeed, but without great achievement. No small honor is to be paid, of course, to the pioneer in any department of work. It was, in a true sense, harder for Mrs. Bradstreet to be Mrs. Bradstreet than for Emerson to be Emerson. The Puritans of Massachusetts Bay were the direct precursors and the actual founders of most that is good in American letters. Those theological treatises and controversial sermons, those painstaking versions of the Psalms, and those faithful records of sight and experience were the index-

fingers pointing to future triumphs. Bradford and Winthrop were the intellectual ancestors of Emerson and Hawthorne. Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards were giants in their day. Benjamin Franklin still remains one of the world's great helpful forces. Jefferson and the writers of the "Federalist" made great contributions to the political wisdom of the nations. But when all this has been said, does it not remain true that some critics have bestowed an unwarrantable amount of time and thought and adulation upon writers of humble rank and small influence, simply because they were early? John Smith, temporarily in America, wrote accounts of American scenes and peoples,—accounts more entertaining than trustworthy; he must be mentioned, but is he, therefore, our first writer? When there is a Central African literature in English, will Henry M. Stanley be reckoned one of its early lights? George Sandys translated Ovid in Virginia, and William Morrell made Latin verses in Massachusetts, both returning to the mother country; how did their experience and writings differ from those of other temporary residents in other foreign lands? English literature, from 1607 to 1776, passed from one brilliant period to another; the American colonies were in constant intellectual and personal communication with the old home. If we think of Shakespeare, Bunyan, Milton, the seventeenth-century choir of lyrists, Sir Thomas Browne, Jeremy Taylor, Addison, Swift, Dryden, Gray, Goldsmith, and the eighteenth-century novelists, what shall we say of the intrinsic literary worth of most of the books written on Amer-

ican soil, by writers who inherited, or shared, the intellectual life of England?

In other words, why should writings which would have passed into obscurity in England be magnified beyond their deserts, merely because they were written on the American coast? We may be interested, as antiquarians, in the poor verses of Anne Bradstreet, Nathaniel Ward, Peter Folger, Michael Wigglesworth, and the Bay Psalmists; we may recognize the intellectual force of Richard and Increase Mather and Roger Williams; and we may laboriously describe the hundreds of sermons, the scores of treatises, the dozens of books of verse, which were printed by colonial writers; but we cannot eulogize them at length without a sad distortion of perspective. A few great names stand out, but only a few. For the purposes of comparative criticism, the student should know thoroughly William Bradford, John Winthrop, Samuel Sewall, Cotton Mather, Jonathan Edwards, Benjamin Franklin, and the makers of the new nation from 1750 to 1790. The work of the rest he should recognize and praise in an adequate degree, but should not magnify beyond its deserts. The history of literature is one thing, bibliography is quite another thing. If a certain space be devoted to the colonial literature of America, then, on the same perspective, ten times as much is needed to bring the record down to our day. One should study the great men profoundly, and let the worthy sermonizers, and pamphleteers, and spinners of doggerel go free. Our forefathers were founding

a state on the basis of the town-meeting; they were spreading Christianity, as they understood it, with might and main; they were opening schools and creating a virtuous and manly public spirit; but for literature, as such, most of them cared little. They made literature possible, just as they made art possible; but they do not deserve, in the chronicles of literature and art, a disproportionate space.

I believe that the time has come for the student to consider American literature as calmly as he would consider the literature of another country, and under the same limitations of perspective. Some things we have not done at all; some we have done ill, some passably well, and some better than any other nation in the world. We can afford to recognize this fact and act upon it, Let us no longer praise an author because he is American, or because his booklet was printed in Boston or New York instead of London or Paris. We can afford to be self-respecting. It is the new city, the shoddy family, the growing literature, that is self-assertive. Hawthorne, Emerson, Longfellow, Motley, are all well able to take care of their own reputations. The development of Hawthorne's genius is to be studied as impartially as we study Dante, and in the same quiet way. And let us not give to John Norton, or Samuel Penhallow, or Mather Byles, or Robert Calef, or Nathaniel Morton, or Percival, or Mrs. Sigourney, time and thought which belong to greater and more lasting names.

Expository criticism of American literature must give way to philosophical criticism. Compendiums

CHAPTER I.

THE RACE-ELEMENTS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE.

LITERATURE is the written record of valuable thought, having other than merely practical purpose. Behind literature is race; behind race, climate and environment. The history of American literature is the history of the literature of a part of the English people, under new geographical and political conditions, within the present limits of the United States.

The predecessors of the English in America left unimportant literary remains. The earliest known occupants of the soil,—the people commonly called Mound-Builders, perhaps the ancestors of the North American Indians,*—whose mysterious life is now in some degree made known to us by mounds, exhumed implements and ornaments, died without leaving any written records. They built homes, tilled the soil, worked mines, and reached a civilization higher in some ways than that of their less numerous descendants, the Indian tribes of modern history; but upon American literature they had no influence, and their life in Central and Eastern North

The Mound-Builders.

* "Prehistoric America," by the Marquis de Nadaillac. Translated by N. d'Anvers; edited by W. H. Dall. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1884.

America is not celebrated by way of memory, even, in any commanding literary production of their last successors. "They had no poet, and they died."

The life of the North American Indians has been closely connected with the life of the English colonists in the New World, and therefore with their books of travel and history, their poems, and their novels.

The Indians.

The first settlers found the Indians on American shores and in American woods; the very existence of the white men was jeopardized by their presence; and the personal and race characteristics of the red men became not only subjects for future romance and song, but matters of grim and direct every-day concern. To this day the Indians, possibly as numerous as in 1607, stand on the outskirts of Caucasian civilization in North America, a problem and a menace, a theme for literature, and a subject for moral and industrial reform.

But "aboriginal American literature," as it has been ambitiously termed, bears to the literature of the United States a far less important relation than Celtic literature bears to English. There is, to be sure, a scanty Indian literature, but it has been an influence rather than an entity; and it deserves mention, in a history of American intellectual progress, as an influence merely. The student of pure literature concerns himself with Longfellow's Hiawatha—the nearest approach to an American epic—or with the novels of Fenimore Cooper, rather than with the remains of Indian eloquence or the paraphrases of Indian verse. Frequent episodes in the

Aboriginal American Literature.

history of the United States prove, to be sure, that Indian oratory sometimes possesses force, or even sublimity; that it may unite poetical thought with bold strength of utterance; and that measured by one rhetorical test, that of its effect upon a somewhat unimpressible and dogged race, it is not undeserving of study by the speakers of other languages. But here, as in poetry, the Indian race has not been one which has created or preserved a literature, in any large sense, whether by wandering minstrels, by rehearsers of national legends, by picture-writing, or by written words. The materials of literature have been about the race, in nature and life, but these materials have lacked the shaping force of an indigenous culture.

Much, indeed, must be said of the Indian, in studying the works of American writers; in the early narratives of colonization, unimportant as literature but interesting as history, he fills a large place; and in the pages of the two authors just mentioned, his picture stands out prominently, known and examined in many lands. Reserving for a future volume of this work the consideration of other matters concerning this interesting race, it may be said at the outset that two utterly variant presentations of Indian character have been prevalent in America, the second of which has chiefly influenced American literature. Indian Character.

In the first place, it has been maintained by many who have been directly familiar with the Indians in daily life, that they are cruel, vindictive, and treacherous; incapable of civilization; and worthy only of

extermination in war or rigorous suppression in peace. No more candid presentation of this view can be found than in the following words of General George A. Custer, a brave fighter in the Indian wars, who finally lost his life at the hands of those whom he so sternly describes :

> My firm conviction, based upon an intimate and thorough analysis of the habits of character and natural instinct of the Indian, and strengthened and supported by the almost unanimous opinion of all persons who have made the Indian problem a study, and have studied it not from a distance, but in immediate contact with all the facts bearing thereupon, is, that the Indian cannot be elevated to that great level where he can be induced to adopt any policy or mode of life varying from those to which he has ever been accustomed, by any method of teaching, argument, reasoning, or coaxing, which is not preceded and followed closely in reserve by a superior physical force. In other words, the Indian is capable of recognizing no controlling influence but that of stern, arbitrary power.*

Many other observers, with an equally good right to speak, and of a mental habit more teachable and less excitable than General Custer's, have reached the contrary conclusion.† They have recognized the fact that the elevation and education of the Indian must be a slow process ; but they have felt that he is capable both of education and of civiliza-

* The *Galaxy* [magazine], New York, January, 1873.

† Gen. George Crook, a successful campaigner against the Indians, put on record in 1884 his belief that there was not in the State of Pennsylvania a town, of similar size, having a population more peaceful and law-abiding than the five thousand Apaches on the San Carlos reservation. Under Gen. Crook, whom these naturally fierce Indians respected, they made considerable progress in agriculture and civilized methods of living.

tion ; that he is less ungrateful than the Englishmen and Americans who have so often abused him ; and that, whatever his present condition, his character has been lowered by long maltreatment and unrequited wrong. " Do we of the present day really know the Indian character at all ? As well say we know the beauty of a grand old forest because we have seen the stumps and dead leaves that mark the place where once it stood." *

Leaving to the ethnologist and the philanthropist the further discussion of the Indian's character, we need do no more, at the outset of this history, than to present a few specimens of his intellectual output, chosen as most characteristic after examination of a large number. These specimens, whose genuineness is at least sufficiently established to warrant their introduction here as illustrations of the powers of Indian intellect, serve to show why the colonists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries wrote books for the aborigines, as well as about them, and thought it worth while to found colleges and schools for their benefit. They also show why American poets and novelists, in later days, have deemed the Indian worth more than an angry or contemptuous chronicle in their pages.

Specimens of Indian Literature.

An Algonquin traditionary account of the Creation, first partially recorded in picture-writing, then reduced to parallel verses in the Delaware dialect, and finally paraphrased in English, is as follows :

1. At first, in that place, at all times, above the earth,

* *Good Company*, Springfield, Mass., March, 1880.

2. On the earth [was] an extended fog, and there the great Manito was.
3. At first, forever, lost in space, everywhere, the great Manito was.
4. He made the extended land and the sky.
5. He made the sun, the moon, the stars.
6. He made them all to move evenly.
7. Then the wind blew violently, and it cleared, and the water flowed off far and strong.
8. And groups of islands grew newly, and there remained.
9. Anew spoke the great Manito, a manito to manitos,
10 To beings, mortals, souls and all,
11. And ever after he was a manito to men, and their grandfather.
12. He gave the first mother, the mother of beings.
13. He gave the fish, he gave the turtles, he gave the beasts, he gave the birds.
14. But an evil Manito made evil beings only, monsters,
15. He made the flies, he made the gnats.
16. All beings were then friendly.
17. Truly the manitos were active and kindly
18. To those very first men, and to those first mothers; fetched them wives,
19. And fetched them food, when first they desired it.
20. All had cheerful knowledge, all had leisure, all thought in gladness.
21. But very secretly an evil being, a mighty magician, came on earth,
22. And with him brought badness, quarrelling, and unhappiness,
23. Brought bad weather, brought sickness, brought death.
24. All this took place of old on the earth, beyond the great tide-water, at the first.*

* Pp. 170–177 of "The Lenâpé and their Legends; with the complete texts and symbols of the Walam Olum [Red Score], a new translation, and an inquiry into its authenticity." By Daniel G. Brinton, M.D. (Brinton's

Some of the Indian love-songs possess beauty of the sort displayed in the following :

My love is tall and graceful as the young pine waving on the hill, and as swift in his course as the noble, stately deer; his hair is flowing, and dark as the blackbird that floats through the air, and his eyes, like the eagle's, both piercing and bright ; his heart, it is fearless and great, and his arm, it is strong in the fight, as this bow made of iron-wood which he easily bends. His aim is as sure in the fight and chase, as the hawk, which ne'er misses its prey. Ah, aid me, ye spirits! of water, of earth, and of sky, while I sing in his praise; and my voice shall be heard, it shall ring through the sky; and echo, repeating the same, shall cause it to swell in the breath of the wind ; and his fame shall be spread throughout the land, and his name shall be known beyond the lakes.*

Inferior to this is the following Chippeway love-song, in which a special-pleader critic has fancied he has found cumulative force :

I will walk into somebody's dwelling,
Into somebody's dwelling will I walk.

To thy dwelling, my dearly beloved,
Some night will I walk, will I walk.

Library of Aboriginal American Literature, No. v., Philadelphia, 1885.) A previous version of this record—of which I have quoted only the opening section—was given in "Historical and Mythological Traditions of the Algonquins, with a translation of the Walum-Olum, or bark record of the Lenni-Lenape," by E. G. Squier ; read before the New York Historical Society, June, 1848 ; printed in *The American Whig Review*, New York, February, 1849; reprinted in *The Indian Miscellany*, edited by W. W. Beach ; Albany : J. Munsell, 1877. This entire production is not of proved genuineness, but its basis is apparently characteristic, and to that extent trustworthy. See Mr. Squier's comments, in the paper cited, and the more valuable and extended discussion in Dr. Brinton's book.

* "Information respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States," by Henry R. Schoolcraft, LL.D., vol. v., p. 612.

Some night in the winter, my beloved,
To thy dwelling will I walk, will I walk.

This very night, my beloved,
To thy dwelling will I walk, will I walk.*

In this brief hymn much is said in few words:

Ever let piety (or prayer)
Be the rule of our lives;
The Great Spirit alone,
Alone let us love.

All evil living of mankind,
All, all that 's bad or weak;
All evil living,—as a tainted wind,—
All, let us all forsake.†

Mr. Charles Godfrey Leland has collected some of the oral traditions of the Passamaquoddy and Penobcost tribes in Maine, and the Micmacs in New Brunswick. In "The Story of The Three Strong Men," a Micmac tale of enchantment, occurs this wife-song:

There are many men in the world,
But only one is dear to me.
He is good, and brave, and strong.
He swore to love none but me;
He has forgotten me.
It was a bad spirit that changed him,
But I will love none but him.‡

* Schoolcraft, vol. v., p. 559; also in "Aboriginal American Authors," by D. G. Brinton, M.D. (Philadelphia, 1883), p. 48. In this interesting monograph Dr. Brinton enthusiastically makes the best presentation of his subject, but is obliged to admit (p. 24) "a poor showing of native literature for all the tribes in the vast area of the United States."

† Schoolcraft, vol. v., p. 612.

‡ "Algonquin Legends of New England; or, Myths and Folk Lore of the Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot Tribes." By Charles G. Leland. Boston, 1884.

The physical, mental, and spiritual characteristics of the Saxons need no long description. We find them, in their crudest state, portrayed with unmistakable fidelity in the pages of Tacitus, the greatest Roman writer of philosophic history; and no less clearly presented in the record of civilization for nineteen Christian centuries. The scholar and the world are equally well acquainted with the Saxons' strong bodies and strong appetites; their resolute courage in fighting wind and sea, fog and cold; their excesses in gluttony and drunkenness; their love of home and children; their stern and undemonstrative temper, kindled most by patriotism and family affection; their Hebraic belief in the one, awful, vengeance-repaying Power; their equally strong belief in the responsibility and the possibilities of the individual man; and their capability of adapting themselves to new circumstances, and of assimilating such foreign elements as may come into their way. Teutons, with these characteristics, pass from the Continent to Britain in the fifth century, and from Britain to America in the seventeenth; little by little they crowd their predecessors backward and downward, or shape them into new forms, until of the five great nations of the world, at the close of the nineteenth century, three are Teutonic—akin in race, in speech, and in general attitude toward religion and social progress. Two of these three nations read each other's books and periodicals, have a constant interchange of material and intellectual goods, and are in essentials but a single folk.*

Saxon Characteristics.

* "I will say that one idea has been strongly impressed upon me, and that is the belief that the peoples of America and England are really iden-

For years the first settlers in New England and Virginia were like Englishmen making a long visit in a foreign country. They came from a fully matured nation, and had no idea of giving up relations with those whom they had left, or of forming a new nation for themselves. Their separation from home characteristics and influences, and their purposes for the future, did not in all respects resemble the wider separation and the strictly selfish purposes of the Saxon settlers in Celtic Britain. The Saxons left all behind them, in an age of infrequent communication between land and land; the Englishmen in America were ever watching the lessening sails of the homeward bark, and eagerly welcoming those newly come from their ancestral villages beyond the sea. In New England, to be sure, the colonists were possessed by a profound religious purpose, at variance with that prevailing at home; but nevertheless they brought with them, and applied to the development of this purpose, every race-characteristic of the Englishmen of the times of James I. They planned to found colonies of the English nation, and of course had a firm belief in the general utility of English institutions, social customs, laws, education, and family management. Their village-idea, all important in the development of the new country, was the Saxon one. Everywhere they adapted, but they seldom created. And after two centuries and a half,

The English in America.

tical in character. We have our special difficulties at home, and you have yours here; but the people of the two countries are really the same at bottom. I have always believed this, but my visit here has confirmed my former idea entirely."—MATTHEW ARNOLD; reported in the *New York Tribune*, March 8, 1884.

the Englishman who comes to America finds the race unchanged in all important matters, and feels that change and development and growth—or lack of development and growth, if he so call it—have not destroyed or concealed the race-type and the race-work.*

New England, in 1620 and the following years, was thus settled mainly by people of pure English stock, and the Pilgrims of Plymouth and the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay, whatever their small differences at first, were at one in their firm religious purpose. Two types of Christians have ever been found in the churches; and, indeed, these two types may be noted in the number of those who associated with, or directly followed, Christ himself. The first consists of those whose struggles with temptation and sin are aided by times and seasons, by cathedrals and cloisters, by vestments and ceremonies, by prayer-books and church calendars; the second consists of those who, like the eagle, look upon the strongest sunlight with undazzled eye,—who, upon the lonely heights of spiritual exaltation, or in the depths of virtually pessimistic self-abasement, commune directly with Jehovah, scorning all human help. The two classes must exist until the end of time; either may run toward religious excesses, but both contain germs of good, and have nobly contributed

Pilgrims and Puritans in New England.

* "In the few days which I have as yet spent in the third England, it is the likeness, not the unlikeness, to the second England which strikes me. I have often to go through a distinct process of thought to remind myself that I am in New England, and not in middle England still."—EDWARD A. FREEMAN; lecture in New York, Feb. 11, 1882.

to the world's civilization. In the early part of the seventeenth century the ritual class had the upper hand in England, therefore no small portion of the independents founded a New England, upon the basis of the social institutions of the old island, as modified by a somewhat narrow but terribly earnest theocratic idea. They carried out the principles of Wycliffe, Tyndale, Luther, Calvin, Latimer; but insisted upon viewing the words of these masters, even, in the light of their own interpretation of the Bible itself. They lived in New England as those holding a corner of the world for God and righteousness, as measured by themselves; against prelates, papists, Baptists, Quakers, and heathen. The ballot was in the hands of the freeman, but the freeman was the church-member, and the church-member was subject to the goverment of the local church. They gave up lesser pleasures for the great inward joy of self-surrender to the right, as they understood it. They likened themselves, not without reason, to the children of Israel in the wilderness; and in them the half-Hebraic temper of the Christianized Saxons appeared in full. The individual before his God—such was the Pilgrim or Puritan of Plymouth, Salem, and Boston. The mistakes and the triumphs of these brave and self-reliant settlers lie at the very root of the intellectual life of New England for two centuries and a half. They made the American nation and American literature possible. Without William Bradford and John Winthrop, as I have said before, we could not have had Emerson and Hawthorne. Their very limitations, the narrow

lines upon which their desperate earnestness worked, made them the best of pioneers. If they failed to develop the fullest manhood, they avoided the dangers of half-belief and of loose morals, most destructive at the outset of any colonial history. They were Old-Testament Christians.

It seems almost an anomaly to aver that the Massachusetts colonists were exceptionally favored in their opportunities for a peaceful working out of a religious, political, and social problem, with its inevitable intellectual corollary. It is true that during the seventeenth century the horrors or dangers of Indian warfare constantly kept within sight; the colonists' meeting-houses were military posts; the men carried guns to the place of worship, and were in constant readiness to transmute spiritual warfare into earthly conflict. But not often have religious theorizers had so good an opportunity to put principles into practice. The early New Englanders were untrammelled by dominant customs, by political machinery, or by the menace of domestic or foreign war. The battles of King Philip's war made less local disturbance for them than did Marston Moor for old England. Statecraft and politics were in the hands of the American Puritans in a sense by no means true in the case of their fellow-sympathizers under Cromwell. In considering the intellectual and political history of America, too much stress can hardly be laid upon the independence possessed by the New England colonists from the first. They desired to erect a Congregational theocracy on new soil; to regulate major and minor

Early Liberty in New England.

morals according to their conception of duty and revealed truth; and to spread an idea of Christianity substantially that of Calvin, as interpreted by them. The remarkable freedom with which they were enabled to do this, for a century and a half, is easily to be explained. The policy of the home government was pretty steadily a commercial one. The better class of English statesmen, whether Whig or Tory, were satisfied to let American fanatics manage religion as they chose, provided fields were tilled, houses multiplied, and wharves stretched toward England. British politicians did not care to insist on the exportation of prevalent British theology, so long as the Puritans bought a fair share of London goods at high prices, and built up recruiting stations for the national trade. This fact the Puritans well recognized; the pages of Bradford and Winthrop prove that they knew when to be discreet toward London, as well as when to be bitter toward prelacy. Church law, civil enactment, conditions of suffrage, free choice of their immediate rulers—these things the colonists held within their own power. The village community, with the church as its centre, never has had a fuller exemplification than in the Massachusetts and Connecticut of 1620–1640. Out of that community legitimately grew the New England Confederation, a precursor of the Nation of 1776.

Religious Persecution.

Personal liberty, in politics and religion, was of course not generally secured in the American colonies at first. The Baptist must go from Massachusetts Bay to Providence Plantations, and the Boston Friend must fly hither and yon; while

the Protestant was under social ban in Maryland, and the Roman Catholic and the Puritan were similarly troubled in Virginia. But if the average liberty of modern America did not then exist anywhere, we must remember that liberty, as defined by John Stuart Mill, is even yet rather ideal than actual. Puritans, Anglicans, and Roman Catholics, on American soil, all failed to solve the problem of individual freedom, but, like Luther and Calvin, they set the ball in motion, and could not stop it when they would. Or, to change the figure for the sake of an apt phrase, Puritan and Presbyterian, Friend, Catholic, and Episcopalian, "builded better than they knew." Any rigorous state church was out of the question. If the Puritans, by permission or by purchase, had the right to regulate religion and local politics under a distant, but real, king or parliament, no line of true reasoning could lead to a denial of similar rights to others under similar circumstances. And if they founded an aristocracy rather than a democracy, an oligarchy, not a commune, let us remember that not all republican thinkers, in wiser days, follow their convictions to a merely theoretical conclusion. Sour, bigoted, and wicked as some of them were, having faith and hope but no charity, they made a great future possible. Their mistakes on Witch Hill and Boston Common must not blind our eyes to the inherent justice and necessary triumph of their general purpose. Roger Williams and his Baptist colony in Rhode Island but dared to carry one step further that for which the Puritans themselves were really fighting—the idea of man's government by con-

science, and of non-hierarchical interpretation of Scripture.

Unlovely indeed does the Puritans' intolerance appear beside Williams' liberality, or the Friends' "inner light," or the placidity of the Dutch in New York, or Lord Baltimore's discreet toleration in Maryland, or even the *laissez-faire* in North Carolina and Georgia. But the just historian, in striking the balance, cannot forget Episcopal persecutions of Puritans in Virginia and South Carolina, aggravating indiscretions on the part of Baptists and Friends in Massachusetts, stolid avarice on the banks of the Hudson, and apparent insincerity in Maryland. Saints and sinners struggled on American soil, but the result was for the optimist and not the pessimist. The United States, like every other Teutonic nation, works through the individual on moral lines; hence its salvation, after manifold errors and sins.

What, then, was the background of the nascent American literature in Puritan New England, in the seventeenth century? An intense and ever-present religious purpose, a grim confidence in the powers of devout Man, and a determination to secure the rights, individual and collective, of the Puritan communities. To these was added an instant resolution, never lost, that a learned ministry should be secured, and that education should be readily accessible. Many of the Puritan leaders were men of social position and of considerable wealth; some were graduates of Cambridge University. Their intellectual and social sanity kept them aloof from the

The Better Elements in Puritanism.

excesses of the half-crazed fanatics who hung upon the edge of the anti-prelatical party in England. Law, as they interpreted it, was supreme; and they recognized clearly that law and progress depend alike upon sound mental training. They were not ready to go so far as did Milton toward "pagan" or continental culture, but books and study, the printing-press, and the didactic sermon, they kept at the front. William Brewster, of Plymouth, had printed in Leyden, in 1617—three years before the landing on Plymouth Rock—a quarto of 184 pages, a Dutch translation of Dod and Cleaver's "Short Catechism on the Ten Commandments"; and this anticipation of the work of the Cambridge and Boston printers shows that the Massachusetts fondness for doctrinal writing and printing had existed before the westward voyage. Catechism-making is not literary work of the highest class, and it is no matter for literary congratulation that the most popular of many catechisms by New England ministers was that famous book first issued in England, and reprinted in Cambridge in 1656, entitled: "Spiritual Milk for BOSTON BABES in either England. Drawn out of the Breasts of both Testaments for their Souls' Nourishment. But may be of like use to any Children. By John Cotton, B.D., late Teacher to the Church of Boston in New England." This work was often re-issued, and was called by Cotton Mather, half a century later, "peculiarly the catechism of New England"; to which words Mather added that it would "be valued, and studied, and improved, until New England cease to be New England." Readers of "The New Eng-

land Primer," in which it was included, are familiar with it; and the booklet, with its grotesque biblico-poetical title, may serve as an illustration of the way in which early Massachusetts made literature—such as it was—the "handmaid of religion." Godliness was the thing ever borne in mind by father, mother, child. So long as books promoted godliness, or at least did not interfere with it, they were permitted, and even encouraged; but it should be clearly stated that most of those who put pen to paper in early New England had religious, and not literary, purposes in view.

The Bible and the Meeting-house.

As the Bible was the radiating point of literature, so the "meeting-house" was the centre of the intellectual life of the community. The plain, rectangular building was neither warmed nor lighted, save by the "meeting-house windows blank and bare"; for stoves were considered superfluous luxuries, and "evening meetings" semi-scandalous. Sermons and prayers were both long and deep, and from both the whole village derived sturdiness and strength for its life-work during the ensuing week. In a true sense the first church of Christ in Boston *was* Boston, in the early and shaping years of the growing town; and so was the first church in Plymouth, Dorchester, Salem, and the other villages of the coast. The ministers taught the people, and of the ministers the governors took counsel. "How shall the ministers be maintained?" was the first question considered by the first general court. Nearly all the residents of any town were members of the church, and, as has been said, none was con-

sidered a freeman until he became a church-member. But within these church limits all were equal. They recognized no bishop of the "apostolic succession," able "to impart a supernatural efficacy to language, water, bread, and wine"; they believed each local church responsible to Christ alone, and bound to neighboring churches only by bonds of charity and discretion and common belief; they held the Bible to be the final and all-inclusive authority; and they spurned liturgies, church-days, and ecclesiastical forms in general. Scrupulous fidelity was observed in following the directions contained in Matthew xviii., 15–17, and it cannot be doubted that an honest endeavor was made to live as Christians ought.* The generally accepted creed was a minutely complete "scheme" of salvation, describing the nature of God and man as if both were capable of presentation in a "sun-clear statement," and as though the laws of speculative theology were as fixed as those of the natural world. This creed must be accepted in its entirety, and disagreement in one point was only less serious than the abandonment of all. The

* "The Puritans were concerned to identify their system with only one stage of antiquity, and that one, as they fully believed, at least one generation back of the starting-point of the prelatical system. It may be stoutly affirmed that if ever an intelligent, scholarly, and earnest body of men, with profound religious purposes to move them, were engaged in any work in the results of which they found full satisfaction, such a work, and so endeavored, was that of the Puritans, when with patient study, singleness of aim, and persistent prayer, they sought to revive, to reconstruct, and then strictly in every feature and element to adopt, the mode of church institution and discipline which they found in the New Testament Scriptures as those of the first Christian disciples and assemblies."—Rev. Dr. GEORGE E. ELLIS, introduction to Arthur B. Ellis' "History of the First Church in Boston," 1630–1880. Boston, 1882.

structure being complete, no part could be removed without endangering the whole.

No task is easier than to present a picture of the spiritual tyranny administered in church, social life, and home, by these theoretical believers in freedom. The aged were not too venerable, nor was the prattling child too feeble, to escape its implacable machinery. But it was a religious system of honesty and downright integrity. Its authors made no attempt to exempt themselves from its operations. Great and small, high and low, famous and obscure,—all were on the same footing before God and man. The system was Puritan, but because it was Puritan it was Miltonic; it could not stop short, though it would, of full spiritual and political freedom. Its last support was the integrity of mind and conscience; and upon this support its ultimate success was sure. The Puritans of New England were men of faith, and their faith has removed mountains of error. "The faith of the New England Puritan, while debasing him before the Lord, gave him virtue to stand before tyrants. From the beginning, their religion, their manner of life, the wilderness which they were compelled to conquer, the institutions which they established and maintained, were preparing the colonists to become the founders of the mightiest empire of self-governed men that the world has seen. And during the whole course of colonial history, the meeting-house—the house for the town-meeting as well as for the worship of God —was the central hearth of light and warmth for the little world of each community." *

* Charles E[illegible]n's address at the 200th anniversary [1881] of the building of th[illegible]ouse at Hingham, Mass.

It was therefore of small moment that in the Puritan meeting-house, and in the Puritan life of which that meeting-house was the centre, there was little of graciousness or outward charm. There were no symbols but creed-symbols, no flower-gardens of the soul, such as Sir Thomas Browne or even Milton walked in; and though the Puritans were formalists in spite of themselves, they took pains to eliminate all art from their worship and all frivolity from their "walk and conversation." Their religion was a joy forever, but it certainly was not a thing of beauty, so far as externals went. The worshippers were poor in worldly goods, poor in the æsthetics of life, and yet rich in hope, faithful in industry, indomitable in courage, trustful in Providence. They did not know how to laugh, but they were equally ignorant of fretting or grumbling. So far as their records have come down to us, they neither felt nor expressed any pleasure in nature. The world was "lost," and so they made no attempt to find any beauty in it. Flowers bloomed and birds sang, while even joyous human nature asserted itself now and then, as in a few of the verses of Anne Bradstreet or in a stray word in a sermon, but not at first. Life was too serious a thing to be frittered away, or sung away, or rusted away; therefore it was either worn out in godly industry or eaten up by the acid of the prevailing doctrine. But duty was done constantly and unrepiningly; and nothing but duty could have made possible that great and potent factor in the world's civilization, the New England of the past two hundred and fifty years.

The Weakness and the Strength of Puritanism.

The original colonists within the present limits of the United States have formed a nucleus around which have gathered—chiefly in the North and West—emigrants from every European nation, and from Asia, not to speak of the great African population due to the former existence of slavery on American soil. Irish abound in the New England and Middle states, Germans in the Middle and Western states, Scandinavians in the Northwest, and French Canadians along the northern border. But the characteristics of the first English settlers remain strongly marked upon the composite people, and the American Irishman, or German, or Frenchman, notwithstanding his love for fatherland, soon loses somewhat of his former nature, under the potent influence of new conditions and of the dominant Saxon temper. The Dutchmen, Frenchmen, Spaniards, and Swedes, who formerly controlled parts of the United States, have left their mark upon local institutions, habits, and dialects; but all the non-English folk have little affected the literature of the country. The study of their past and future in America belongs to the social historian, not to the literary recorder.

Non-English Elements in the United States.

The seeds of American literature were most effectively sown in New England, but its growth has been subject to complex influences in other parts of the country—influences sometimes favorable and sometimes injurious. Thus the numbers and power of the Dutch in New York, the Swedes in Delaware, and even the English Friends in Pennsylvania,

acted at first as a hindrance to a literature necessarily English, and in intellectual sympathy with prevalent English ideas. But Dutchman, Friend and Swede made contributions of solidity of character, business thrift, rectitude of purpose, or political sturdiness, to the foundations of the literature that was to be; while all elements in the colonies were unconsciously building up a cosmopolitan nature which each, individually, was far from favoring.

The city of New York is to-day the commercial capital of America; and the principal causes of its growth from the first were commercial causes. The Dutch traders came to the New World to make money; picked out an advantageous site for a town; and began the task of building up a strictly material prosperity, without much reference to religious propagandism, the chance for "freedom to worship God," the education of the Indians, or mere adventure and discovery. Dutch civilization, however, as shown by the marvellous history of the Netherlands, is based upon integrity, courage, and conviction, and all these qualities appeared on Manhattan Island in the early days. The Dutch can be brave, patient, and in the highest degree intellectual when they will; and it is no disparagement to them, as a folk, to say that spiritual and mental progress were not uppermost in the minds of the early settlers of New Amsterdam. For half a century they governed New York, and the methods of government and the characteristics of the people, with all differences, were clearly Teutonic, and therefore in general accordance with those prevailing in New England.

The Settlers in New York.

Gradually the Dutch power, governmental and social, faded away; the language, in a century, gave place to English; but the effect of Dutch colonization has never ceased to be visible in New York.

The Middle Colonies.

Trade and farming in the Middle States are more remunerative than anywhere else in the country, population is denser, and wealth is greater. But the school and the printing-press were not brought to the front as soon as in New England, though means for procuring education and reading were more available in New York and the Central colonies than in the Southern. The immediate effect of English rule in New York, it should be added, was not favorable. The English and Dutch influences were mutually hostile, and between them it came to pass that New York youths studied outside the colony, if at all, and home reading was not common among those of either sex. Manor-house life, here and in the South, was not very advantageous to the general speed of intellectual progress; and patroon exclusiveness too often barred out mental good as well as social intrusion. But in the towns was a broader life; money was tolerably plenty, society was gay, amusements abounded, and foreign customs and influences were not unknown. The already cosmopolitan and polyglot New York of two centuries ago, or the New York of the period just

New York City.

previous to the Revolution, contained within it the germs of its present greatness, as well as of its present defects. Because of its commercial prominence, it has become the principal distributing centre of literature, art, music, and general culture in

America;—so much at least may be set to the indirect credit of its early settlers, aided by the natural advantages of location. The later English influence in the Middle colonies differed from that exerted in New England in religious purpose, not in general race-characteristics. New York City and State have therefore affected American literature in a broader and more cosmopolitan, but less earnest and powerful, manner than have Boston and New England. The local characteristics of the distributing centre are modified more and more by the steady influx of intelligent men and women from other parts of the country, who go to New York as they would go from Edinburgh to London. New York, and not Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, or San Francisco, is able to present some picture of the country as a whole. It is not, and will not be, to the United States just what London is to England or Paris to France, but its general relation is similar to that of the two great European literary capitals. And it should not be forgotten that from New York and Pennsylvania, not from Massachusetts or Virginia, came those books which first gave America a literary name in Europe.

The influence of the Friends in Pennsylvania has always been great; and to them is due in large measure the sedate and honest character of the great State. But other religious denominations—Mennonites, Moravians, Dunkards, and more numerous Lutherans and Presbyterians—brought their religious zeal to the settlement of its broad fields. The Germans have abounded within its borders, and

Pennsylvania.

Scotch, Irish and Welsh have left some impress upon its character. The Swedes in Delaware were less influential than the Germans in Pennsylvania, and were sooner assimilated. The survival of German forces in Pennsylvania is shown in the "Pennsylvania-Dutch" dialect, and in the calm and Christ-like life of the Moravian settlements of Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Litiz. The Germans early established presses and published books, many of which were devotional. Toleration was in vogue, and the non-martial spirit of the Friends and Moravians promoted the welfare of the commonwealth. To the Puritan, the Continental ideas of some of the Pennsylvanians seemed dangerously lax, but piety was the rule, and license the exception. Schools and hospitals were established, and the study of science was favored. Franklin, the great intellectual force in Philadelphia in the eighteenth century, was undoubtedly able to do a greater work than he would have found possible in Massachusetts. Philanthropy, hygiene, and household thrift were everywhere considered, and the average comfort was greater than in any other colony. The printing-press was always active in Philadelphia, which became for a time both the political and the literary capital of the New World. Postal facilities were fair, and if to these external conditions had been added, by the several elements in the population, a stronger, sterner, or perhaps more selfish spirit of intellectual assertion, this favored region would have become a greater literary nursery. When the Friends fell into a minority, they were still potent, but their

range of ambition was more limited than that of the Massachusetts Puritans. Literature has always owed more to the positive virtues, however tarnished, than to the negative, however pleasing.

New Jersey, in its race-elements and in its social and intellectual development, resembled New York, while Delaware was like Pennsylvania. Newark, New Jersey's chief city, was of New England parentage, but did not long retain its early characteristics. The intellectual control of the colony, at the time of the Revolution, was in Presbyterian hands, and to the solid learning of some of the Princeton divines its literary development has been due, in good measure. In Maryland, notwithstanding the courtly element in its society, the toleration extended by the Roman Catholics, and the benignant influence of the proprietary authorities, general education was not successfully provided, reading was unfashionable, and libraries were few. The creditable revival of learning and literature in Baltimore and the District of Columbia was due to other than original causes, and was postponed for many years.

New Jersey.

Maryland.

Of the Southern commonwealths of America, Virginia was the largest and most important, and its race-characteristics may be considered as those dominant in the whole Southern section.

The Southern Colonies.

The people and customs of Virginia differed, to be sure, from those of the Carolinas and Georgia. North Carolina was inhabited by a population inferior to that of the Old Dominion

North Carolina.

in wealth, education, and enterprise. The "poor white" element was strong. Social affairs were in a crude condition, learned men were few in the professions, manufactures and commerce were unimportant, and the life of the colony was little more than a comparatively indolent struggle for bread. Settlements were small and scattered; no printing press was set up before 1764; there was no college; and schools scarcely existed. The conditions for literary growth in North Carolina hardly appeared prior to the Revolution. South Carolina, though resembling North Carolina in physical characteristics, was more fortunate. The class of English settlers was of a higher order, and the foreign elements in the population were a source of added strength. The French Protestants were numerous, and here, as wherever else they settled, were frugal, industrious, intelligent, and often rich. A respectable German body was welcomed, and so were the Highland Scotch and the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians from the north of Ireland. The Church of England was at first established by law, but unsuccessfully; the religious legislation for a hundred years was strict, and almost of the Massachusetts pattern. Religion, established or dissenting, was at the root of the work of the colony, and gave it a great advantage over its more depraved Northern neighbor. Drunkenness, however, was a vice so prevalent as to be an element of great danger, and the better classes, surrounded by numerous slaves, were physically idle, though intellectually able to keep the upper hand. Education in the colony, and

South Carolina.

for the poor and middle classes, was a languishing affair, but the sons of the well-to-do planters and merchants often studied abroad. Under these conditions, of course, literature was not early developed, though from the aristocracy came alert leaders in state-craft and oratory—the intellectual avocations most likely to succeed in such a community. Georgia, at the present time the most promising Southern State, was settled late, by the intrepid Oglethorpe, with earnest Englishmen in his company. The famous Wesleys, Charles and John, worked in Georgia for a time, to the injury of the colony, on the whole; George Whitefield also labored there, at least doing no harm; and the ever-zealous Moravians and the faithful Friends came in small numbers. Philanthropy was in vogue; the very aim of the founders was to provide for the poor, especially the debtor class, and for orphans and the friendless. An attempt was even made, though unsuccessfully, to prohibit slavery and keep out rum. The depraved classes were naturally numerous, for a time, and attempts to foster particular industries were injurious; but after thirty or forty years the natural wealth of the region, and the closer management of affairs by the government of Great Britain, brought about a steady and hopeful development, which gave scope to the admirable aims of many of the settlers. Education, however, was belated, and literature nonexistent for many years.

Georgia.

The dominant influence in the Southern colonies was that of Virginia. We have seen that the seeds

of Northern development were sown on the shores of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay; and a corresponding importance, for the other great section of the United States, is to be assigned to the commencement of Virginian civilization between the York and James rivers. The settlers at Jamestown in 1607, the beginners of the new nation, were of pure English stock, and in all race-characteristics were at one with the builders of Plymouth, Boston, and Salem. But between the two bodies there were important marks of difference. The first Virginian colonists represented the Church of England, not the Independents and Puritans. While laborers were included in their number, the greater portion consisted of men of aristocratic family. Adventure and enrichment in the New World were the leading objects, rather than religious freedom, of which the Anglicans, of course, had no lack at home. Some of the colonists were willing to work, but unable to do so, effectively, because of their unfamiliarity with manual labor. Toilers with the hand were less numerous than in Massachusetts,—though not a few of the Puritans and the Pilgrims were men of high education. This lack crippled Virginia's progress for many years, and it was not made good by the development of slavery. The presence of a planter class, unused to physical toil, accounts for many of the failures—as well as for some of the successes—of Virginia and the South for two centuries and a half. And at the first—save for Bartholomew Gosnold and John Smith—there was a lack even of that competent leadership which so favored the progress of the

Virginia.

Northern settlements. Among the colonists of every grade there was also for some time a lack of *homes;* for, as in the California immigration of 1849, the gold-seekers and adventurers did not bring their families with them. These circumstances account, in large measure, for the more solid prosperity of New England, as compared with Virginia, in the first half of the seventeenth century.

By 1650, however, the commonwealth of Virginia had begun to rise to the commanding position it so long retained in the American society. Towns were almost wholly lacking, but in the homes of the planters were comfort and the influences of manorial centres. Education was cared for, at least in the higher circles, though the absence of villages forbade the existence of many schools. As early as 1619 a college had been arranged for, and in 1693 the establishment of William and Mary College at Williamsburg gave the colony an educational centre at the capital and political head-quarters. Religion was protected by the local government, which supported the Episcopal clergy by taxation. Intolerance and persecution, not unmixed with superstition, disgraced the colony for a time, and even printing was suppressed; but these evils gradually faded away, and different religious denominations, and the Williamsburg printing-press, were given a fairer chance. The Established Church was, it is true, affected for many years by the evil influences which so far removed the Church of England in the eighteenth century from the spirit of early Christianity; but among the Virginia Episcopal clergy were many men of zeal,

learning, and integrity, and the sober and virtuous temper, though not the average learning, of the Dissenters was quite equal to that of the Episcopalians. Trade was subordinate to agriculture, and under the latter head tobacco was the all-important item. The rich soil promoted wealth, and also tempted to habits of extravagance. Slaves abounded; above them was the "poor white" class, partly recruited by convict transportation; then came the middle class of worthy farmers, including Scotch-Irish Presbyterians and some Germans; while at the top were the comparatively rich and intelligent, though sometimes idle and dissipated, representatives of the Cavaliers. Foreign elements were small in percentage, and Virginia was an English colony, working under many disadvantages of class-relations, in favorable climatic conditions.

The best Virginians—the leading section of the population—were manly men, Englishmen through and through, lovers of liberty and order, broad in thought and generous in act. They were inferior to the Puritans in intensity of conviction, but superior to them in catholic temper. Their education was often mediocre, but they were men of the world and of affairs, accustomed and able to rule. They visited England, where some of them studied, and they brought back something of London life and characteristics, as well as the standard English books of the day. Williamsburg, small and unimpressive as it was, boasted of cavalier graces unknown in the North. From the Virginia aristocracy, whatever its faults,—and because of the manorial system whose

leaders were accustomed to rule,—sprang the great Virginians who were so prominent in the Revolution, and who made the State the "mother of presidents." In brief, as Massachusetts showed the world how potent could be English village life in a new land, so Virginia displayed the workings of the squirearchy. The town-meeting was the starting-point of Northern civilization; the planter's mansion of Southern.

At the time of the Declaration of Independence, the new nation—if such it could be called—stretched from Maine to Georgia on the Atlantic seaboard. Florida was Spanish, and Louisiana, the great region west of the Mississippi, was also under actual Spanish ownership, though largely French in population and social characteristics. The sparsely settled "Northwest Territory" included the present States of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan, with a part of Minnesota. By purchase or conquest the United States has covered all these, and stretched westward to the Pacific Ocean, until its marine line on that ocean is almost opposite the original one on the Atlantic. Both Northern and Southern colonists steadily marched westward, carrying with them their characteristics of race, society, and religion. "Unto him that hath shall be given"; the Northern emigrants to the West were more numerous than the Southern; the configuration of the continent gave them more land to occupy; and a newer New England gradually appeared in Ohio, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, California, and elsewhere. Southern traits were similarly transferred to Alabama and Missis-

The West.

sippi (formerly parts of Georgia), and Virginia and the Carolinas gave their tone to Tennessee and Kentucky; while all the Southern colonies were duplicated in some degree in the States arising west of the Mississippi, and in parts of the territories. In New Orleans was the peculiar French and Creole society, a bit of Gallic life in the New World, with quaint and sturdy characteristics, fond of the old home, but at last patriotic in the new. Its influence was social and industrial rather than literary.

Immigrants.

All through these newer parts of the United States, governed by the English stock of the Northern and Southern colonies, have poured streams of foreign immigration,—especially in the Northern division. In some of the territories the men of foreign birth are actually in the majority, and foreign elements are large throughout the whole West. As in the East the Irish, Germans, and French Canadians are employed in manufacturing establishments and in mines, so the Germans and Scandinavians are farmers in the Northwest, and foreigners of various names are farmers, cattle-raisers, and miners on the Pacific coast. But wherever they are, they soon become Americanized, in greater or less degree, and do not remain isolated or unassimilated elements,—with the exception of the Chinese, Italians, and Hungarians. Still more generally is this found to be true in considering the foreign race-elements in American literature, which, in the West and Southwest, as elsewhere, are merely subordinate influences. Literature, in the vast region outside

the thirteen original colonies, is English literature, sprung from the same sources and influenced by the same conditions that affected the literature of the Atlantic seaboard. One writer finds themes among the Louisiana Creoles, another in the lake country of Ohio and Michigan, another in the wild Tennessee mountains, another among the raw settlers of early Arkansas, another with the Californian miners, another in life on the plains, or in the Sierra Nevada mountains, or among the Indians ; but writers and literature are English, under somewhat unfamiliar conditions, but never under a new race-domination.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW ENVIRONMENT OF THE SAXON MIND.

THE physical conditions of the present territory of the United States have aided, from the outset, in its political and industrial, and by corollary its intellectual development. Situated in the middle of North America, possessing a great number of harbors, lakes, and water-ways, affording a wide variety of soil and climate, and on its European settlement inhabited by a relatively small number of wandering Indians, this great region lent itself readily to the work of the principal colonization in the world's history. Its rich forests and fields, its suitable town-sites and advantageous drainage basins, its hidden mines, its natural lines of communication with the sea, formed the basis for future national development. Race and physical forces have wrought, in this favored region, the results which a student of social science, had such existed two centuries and a half ago, might have foretold with a reasonable degree of confidence.

Physical Conditions.

The United States, like most of the leading nations of the world at the present time, is practically a cold-weather country. On the northern coast were most of the populous early settlements, and there the chief commercial influence has remained. From the northeast corner of the land, too, have come the

greater part of the books which must be considered at length in these pages. Climate does not make character; still less does it produce literature. Cold weather cannot, by itself, make good writers, else Canada would have more literature to show. But the fact remains that the dominant forces in the world's civilization are now exerted from the northern part of highly civilized Europe and the United States, just as, two or three thousand years ago, they were exerted from the southern part of Europe and Asia. To this fact, as bearing upon questions of climate, the history of the United States adds a force hardly exerted by the records of an older civilization.

The cognate relation of mountains to liberty and free thought, however, need not specially be considered here, for the seaboard and lowlands of the United States have produced its leaders in statecraft no less than in literature. The mountain regions of the country are still sparsely settled, and have produced a small indigenous literature.

In considering the physical features of the country, which have chiefly influenced the distribution of its population, and in some lesser degree its literary growth, it must be remembered, however, that the literature, still more than the industries, of many of its sections must be a thing of future development. The country stretches from 25° to 49° in latitude, and from 67° to 125° in longitude; and its mean annual temperature ranges from below 40° to 75° and over. The annual rain-fall varies from 10 inches to 60, and the elevation from the sea-level rises to more than 10,000 feet. None but the most general deductions

are possible, in considering a territory of this size, as to the effect of physical forces upon character. If New England has produced its Hawthorne, Emerson and Longfellow, no less can Virginia point to her Washington and Jefferson. But in the intellectual contest, the "stern and rock-bound coast" has usually had the advantage over the "sunny South" or the rich Western plains. Where cold freezes genius, or where heat enervates it, we cannot look for great books—save perhaps in Iceland; but it is enough to say that at present the greater literary productiveness seems to appear in the lands of the winter fire and the evening lamp, by the stormy sea which our ancestors have braved and loved for a thousand years.

Colonial Relations.

The colonial relation of the English-speaking (and Dutch and Swedish) settlements in America was of greater importance than the ordinary occupation of a distant land by subjects of a crown. It was the precursor of the independence of a great nation; its partial freedom naturally developed into emancipation from the control of the old home; and it powerfully affected the politics, religion, and society of Europe itself. England owned the land, but varied her assertion of authority with virtual permission of local self-government; and she was content to leave the colonists somewhat to themselves, while she herself was slowly assuming, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the first position in the commerce of the world. New England was almost openly contemptuous of Charles I. and Charles II.; and though the English colonies, in theory, were

crown property,—not governed by Parliament, even, —and were occasionally oppressed and insulted, the half-independent revolution of 1688–9, in Boston, against Sir Edmund Andros, was a sign of incipient democracy rather than of humble colonialism. Nor was it the act of a dependent when Governor William Shirley (though he was in general a believer in royal authority) issued in 1755 a proclamation for the enforcement of a law passed by the General Court of the colony, laying duties upon vellum, parchment, and paper. Stamps were actually made for this taxation, and though the enactment was "in behalf of his majesty the king," it was the willing work of a self-respecting colony, which indignantly spurned, ten years later, the royal attempt to force the use of stamps by virtue of mere kingly prerogative. This spirit of independence was furthered by the French-and-Indian war, which likewise promoted the idea of confederation for a common good in the presence of a common danger.

Provincialism.

Nevertheless, the colonies were colonial and provincial in many ways, and felt like poor relations in the presence of the material and intellectual wealth of England. Writers, in particular, kept their eyes fixed on England; indeed, it would have been better if they had copied more than they did, for their imitations were too often ridiculously below the originals. Before Franklin there was almost no native intellectual work of the first class. As late as 1807 Fisher Ames said that we were never likely to have an American literature, and that, so far, we had pro-

duced nothing worth mentioning, save a political treatise or two. "Shall we," he satirically inquired, "match Joel Barlow against Homer or Hesiod? Can Thomas Paine contend against Plato?" Previous to the Revolution things had been, of course, in a worse condition, and fulsome puffery of such writers as Anne Bradstreet or Phillis Wheatley—mere curiosities in the field of general literature—deceived no one in England, though it gratified some American patriots. Strength that in Europe could be bestowed upon literature and art was needed in America in the struggle for life and in the development of politics. There was plenty of ability in New England, New York, Virginia, and South Carolina, but in the colonial days it did not, and could not, often take the literary form. Colonialism in literature was sometimes subserviency, sometimes boastful self-assertion; but in either shape it had to bide its time before it could grow into something better.

A dependent feeling on the part of colonial residents is both natural and necessary. Whatever the religious and political differences between the American colonies and England, the former were properly continuing, in most respects, the language, institutions, purpose, and attitude of the residents of England from the time of the Saxon invasion of 449. Nor could the feeling of colonial dependency be eliminated at once. Even at the present time it should be remembered that our colonial career lasted a century and a half, while our national life has covered only a century. Libraries, centres of book

and newspaper publication, museums, architectural monuments, long-lasting houses, populous intellectual centres, rich and fashionable life, were all abroad. At first, nails and bricks had to be imported, then books and luxuries. A certain humility toward foreign critics naturally existed, nor could it be thrown off before the intellectual and social environment had changed. Political emancipation is one thing, a rounded and complete national life another thing. The Declaration of Independence could not sever ties more than a thousand years old, nor create at once a life free from the feeling of habitual deference. This feeling has survived in some minds, though with ever-weakening force. It comes by direct descent through the more timid Federalists of 1812, and offsets the furious and intensely patriotic indignation once aroused by the publication of such books as Dickens' "American Notes" or Mrs. Trollope's "Social Manners of the Americans."

But long ago were laid the foundations of a self-respecting spirit which, in literature as in life, is unduly excited neither by the studious praise of one foreign critic nor by the waspish sting of another. Franklin, Jefferson, Hamilton, and serene Washington showed that the colonial relation had ceased, and that its results must be temporary. The war of 1812 increased the sense of independence; and the United States was henceforth old enough, with the patriotic though not infallible Noah Webster, to read and speak the words of an "*American* Dictionary of the English Language."

The Growth of Self-reliance.

There can be no question that the United States is a *nation*, in the strictest sense of the word. The discussions of a century ago have not yet died away, and tens of thousands still think centralization in America a more menacing foe than disintegration. The rights of the States are and must be zealously guarded, as of old, and local interests can never be permitted to be crushed or forgotten by the general government. But while it is doubtless true that the present national government, if foreseen in its entirety a hundred years ago, would not have been adopted by the thirteen original States, differing among themselves, and fearing a new foe to constitutional independence, it is also true that its existing nature and powers are the solid creation of years, not likely to be materially changed in our day. By the development of national character in the fight for independence; by later experience in war and peace; by struggle, victory, and defeat of party and faction; by annexation and abandonment of territory; by settlement of political, financial, and social questions; and finally by four years of war, it has come to pass that the existence and sovereignty of the nation have been made secure. Slowly but steadily the federal idea has gained at the expense of the confederate, until the great majority of American citizens instinctively say: "The United States *is* a nation," not "The United States *are* a confederation." Between absolutism at the one extreme and anarchy at the other, stand the essentially united American people, with common hopes and a com-

The United States a Nation.

mon destiny. Many a despotic government is far more influenced by localism than is the great American republic, with few dialects, with no sectional quarrels save those which have become comparatively unimportant, and with a constant tendency toward a uniform type.

This fact, of course, influences and will influence American literature in a marked degree. The differences between Boston and New York; Philadelphia and Chicago; Cincinnati and Charleston, or even San Francisco and New Orleans, are really superficial and unimportant. They change their skies, not their political and essential social condition, who go from the Atlantic to the Pacific, or from the Lakes to the Gulf. The uniform type toward which the whole country tends is, of course, somewhat different from the English type, in minor respects, though resembling it in essentials.

A Unified Nation.

Again, the United States is the only nation of highest civilization, in all North and South America, and it is separated from its civilized peers in Europe by thousands of miles of broad ocean. Its isolation powerfully affects the national type, already influenced by many and varied powers of race and climate. Having passed beyond the distinctly imitative period, though in constant communication with the Old World, the whole nation exists, speaks, and works after a fashion of its own. The national type affects and changes those brought under its influence, and approximates them to itself; thus increas-

An Isolated Nation.

ing its powers and its peculiarities, though not becoming alienated from fellowship with that which is best in foreign lands. The conservatism of Europe has restrained American extravagancies, while too far removed to crush American independence of thought and action. The broader the productive field, and the more uniform its intelligent cultivation, the greater the chance of intellectual product.

The isolation of the United States has also aided its growth by promoting and almost requiring its freedom from foreign wars and political entanglements. "Our relations with foreign powers continue to be amicable," * is a phrase which, in substance, often occurs in American state-documents, and which records a fact desired by the ablest statesmen of all political parties. Strength, men, and money are kept at home for home development. The absence of customary foreign wars, the extreme unlikelihood of any aggressive or defensive conflict with a European power, tend to keep the people of the United States in a peaceable frame of mind at home. Nothing could be farther from the truth than to call the Americans an excitable or bellicose people. They fight when needs be, but prefer peace at home and abroad. The great civil war of 1861–65, arising from causes not likely to be repeated, actually left the country more unified than it found it. Political assassination, not unknown in the United States, is a "gratuitously awful crime," † not affecting na-

A Peaceable Nation.

* President Arthur's Message to Congress, Dec., 1884.

† "Over the President's Grave," *The Contemporary Review*, 1881.

tional institutions in the slightest degree. Close elections, preceded by exciting political campaigns, like that of 1884, disturb American society and American finances less than a petty fracas would disturb Spain, France, or Italy.* Even a political contest like that of 1876, when half the voters in the country were doubtful whether the elected candidate had been given the presidential chair, did not arouse intestine tumults. Purely socialistic disorders can be quelled more easily in the great American cities than in European capitals, partly because of this peaceable habit of the citizens, rich and poor, and partly because property is more widely distributed. Even the denizens of "shanty-town" in New York City own some property, and do not want a communistic distribution of their goats and geese. The stability of American institutions is underestimated by those who have never watched the Americanizing process through which the immigrant soon passes. A people essentially peaceable, in all classes, is sure to be a tolerably well-educated people, and therefore one affording a good basis for literary work.

The high resolve so nobly worded in Abraham

* "Since the close of your last session the American people in the exercise of their highest right of suffrage have chosen their chief magistrate for the four years. When it is remembered that at no period in the country's history has the long political contest which customarily precedes the day of the national election, been waged with greater fervor and intensity, it is a subject of general congratulation that, after the controversy at the polls was over, and while the slight preponderance by which the issue had been determined was as yet unascertained, the public peace suffered no disturbance, but the people everywhere patiently and quietly awaited the result. Nothing could more strikingly illustrate the temper of the American citizen, his love of order, and his loyalty to law. Nothing could more signally demonstrate the strength and wisdom of our political institutions."—President ARTHUR'S Message to Congress, 1884.

Lincoln's Gettysburg oration—"that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth"—can be carried out only by a sound and general education. Universal suffrage must be a failure when based on universal ignorance, or when it becomes a levelling of the influence of the best, down to or beneath the influence of the worst. Rascals and ignoramuses vote in the United States, while intelligent women and bright and ingenuous youths are denied the right; and unqualified immigrants and freedmen have full powers of self-government, so far as the law can give them those powers. But the town-meeting of the colonies has developed into no commune to-day. Intelligence and morality are at the top; in the long run they are at the top even in the South, with its sharp distinctions of race and competence, or in New York, the receptacle of the residuum of a part of debased foreign society. In America the majority rules the minority, and the majority is ruled by the principles of Anglo-Saxon ethics, developed by education. Because these principles can be more freely developed, because this education can be made more general, American institutions are more stable and American thought more sound than the institutions and thought of people less favorably situated and less completely in earnest.* Nor has the growth of

General Education.

* "How homogeneous American society is, I have done my best to declare; how smoothly and naturally the institutions of the United States work, how clearly in some most important respects the Americans see, how straight they think."—MATTHEW ARNOLD, in *The Nineteenth Century*, February, 1885.

wealth seriously endangered American institutions and thought. The spirit of the ancestors survives, though modern Americans are more comfortable in their daily lives. The country was rich in 1861, but its wealth did not hinder or obscure patriotism, heroism, the noblest self-sacrifice. The true life and spirit burn beneath the external adornment. The late Vice-President Wilson once told me that, in his opinion, there was more self-sacrifice in the North (the same was true of the South) during the war of 1861 than during that of 1776. This spirit will show itself still, whenever there is need. It cannot glitter and shine as in the days of war and of new building; but it exists and works in the soberer time of slow and steady development. For its strength it chiefly depends upon patient, sound, far-reaching education. America will have fewer leaders in the years to come; but it will have as many workers.* In a period of peace many of these workers naturally turn to literature. Wars have done little for American literature; peace has done much, and will do more.

* "In the period of erection there were great architects and master builders; in the period of constitutional interpretation there were, at a distance from the people, great political schoolmen, who pondered and expounded the letter of the law, and, nearer the people, great constitutional advocates, who cast the doctrines of the schoolmen into policy; and in the period of abolitionist agitation there were great masters of feeling and leaders of public purpose. The period of Federal construction is long passed; questions of constitutional interpretation are no longer regarded as of pressing urgency; the war has been fought, even the embers of its issues being now almost extinguished: and we are left to that unexciting but none the less capitally important business of every-day peaceful development and judicious administration, to whose execution every nation in its middle age has to address itself with what sagacity, energy, and prudence it can command."—"Congressional Government: A Study in American Politics." By Woodrow Wilson. Boston, 1885.

Constant care, of course, is needed to keep the percentage of illiteracy below the danger-mark; for upon this depends not only the average literary chance of productiveness, but the safety of the nation itself. Thus there was, in 1880, in every Southern State, a larger percentage of whites unable to read and write than in any Northern one,—a circumstance the bearing of which upon literary product is as obvious,—and as much a subject of regret,—to the resident of one section as to that of another. In the State of South Carolina the illiteracy (of whites and blacks) was 55.4 per cent., a fact which emphasizes the need of the earnest efforts now being made by nation, State, and individual toward the education of the freed blacks. In the whole country, however, the average of illiteracy was but 9.4 per cent.,—certainly very small in view of all conditions, past and present. The South is bending its efforts earnestly toward the betterment of its school work, and the general outlook for education in America, with its prevalent public school system, is better than that in any other great nation save Germany. Its geographical isolation has not had the usual effect of retarding educational progress.

Dangers of Illiteracy.

To the separateness of the nation is also due, in large measure, its religious freedom, and the number of Christian denominations within its borders. Freed, to a great extent, from the domination of ecclesiastical authority and precedent, and from the first an asylum for men oppressed for conscience' sake, the United States favors the multiplicity of re-

Religious Freedom.

Many Religious Denominations.

ligious bodies, not only by reason of its wide extent of territory, but also because of its distance from the national or would-be universal churches of Europe. Denominations which in England exert a comparatively small influence,—such as the Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, or Disciples',—rise to great numerical and spiritual importance in America, and lead the religious life of millions of communicants. It is a significant fact that among the presidents of the United States have been members of, or regular worshippers at, Episcopal, Congregational, Unitarian, Presbyterian, Reformed, Disciples', and Methodist churches, besides two who, like Franklin, were simply theists. The United States is so prevailingly Protestant that probably no Roman Catholic could be elected president, but with this exception the religious belief of presidential candidates is not even thought of, in exciting elections. But a Roman Catholic has held the highest judicial position in the United States; many others have been senators; and since the Constitution requires that the president be of native birth, and prominent Roman Catholics are often of foreign birth, the question of the presidential eligibility of a member of this church has not yet been fully tested. No other religious body in the United States (the Episcopalians and Moravians included) feels any potent foreign influence; and an American Roman Catholic parish or communicant soon becomes partially Americanized, and differs materially from one in France, Spain, Italy, or Austria. The Protestant population in the United States is greatly in the majority; the country is a

Christian and believing one, in little danger of atheism, communism, or the "Goddess of Reason"; but it is at heart liberal and tolerant, and is rapidly becoming more so. The pessimistic student of social science can hardly deny that the experiment of religious freedom, on a large scale, has thus far been successfully carried out in the American nation.

Lack of Historic Background.

It is not easy to say how much the American nation has lost, or how much it has gained, by its lack of historic and artistic background. Crudeness and rawness must inevitably be found in a newly settled land, and literature, in particular, suffers in an environment which is crude and raw. But if American literature has lacked, and still lacks in a considerable degree, the aid of external elements of historic tradition, romance, and culture, it is the American mind, after all, which has made that literature possible.

Advantages of Isolation.

This American mind, on the whole, has gained by its isolation. The English inheritance of culture and temper it shares with Englishmen, and the meagre surroundings of the American intellect have by no means been a disadvantage unmixed with good. Those who work in ill-equipped solitude, or far from bases of intellectual supplies, must think; and if their minds are stored, their thinking is not destroyed because they are remote from treasures of architecture, painting, and literature. The cold-weather minds in early New England were zealous, prudent, and independent; and if their local world was meanly supplied with luxuries, it did not distract them from a solid intellectual purpose. That purpose was not literary, at first; but high intel-

lectual independence is sure to produce literature sooner or later, when it recognizes the real bounds of its freedom, and gathers schools and scholars about it. American isolation promoted active religious work; religion soon demanded political freedom as well as spiritual; and the free prayer and the free vote left the whole mind free. Cotton Mather, Samuel Adams, Ralph Waldo Emerson—the logical sequence is as clear as the chronological. This history is repeating itself in newer parts of the United States. A lazy folk is content in luxury and crushed in adversity, but a Saxon people, in a remote new home, carries with it what mental equipment it can, thinks when it cannot work, and out of this thought in times of enforced separation and leisure, devises for its children something better than it had for itself.

As the American rural community became the county town, and the county town the city, there grew up, in later years, a city life unlike that of Europe. Though American literature owes more, as yet, to country freedom than to city wealth, the recent increase in the number of cities in the United States has somewhat changed the intellectual life of the nation. City life in America is deeply marked by the effects of isolation from Europe. A New England or Virginia village is less different from an English village than is an American city from a city in England or on the Continent. Ancient buildings, spots sacred with historic legend, invaluable galleries of paintings, rich museums—all these are lacking, in large measure. This enforced poverty America

Cities and the Intellectual Life.

strives to ameliorate in various ways. She treasures with jealous care her comparatively few battle-grounds and revolutionary head-quarters, and her small legendary lore. Pictures and books are gathered in public and private collections, and museums of antiquities are multiplied, to take the place, in part, of the richer European galleries. The American has more than the usual Saxon mania for travel, and he brings home with him as much of Europe as he can. He reads London papers, dwells in continental hotels, and buys antiquities with absurd freedom of purse, not so much from a lingering sense of colonialism, as from a desire to make good the inevitable lack at home. One cannot have the freedom of the forest with the conveniences and culture of the city, but the eager American would fain be intensely American and yet cosmopolitan. He succeeds in this hard task better, at any rate, than others have done. Eastern America is in fact both old and new—bound to Europe by a thousand ties of the intellect, and close to the Western States in heart and essential national purpose. If the American of the past was too ready to make a money offer for European culture that money could not buy, his wiser successor, prizing the isolation of his American home, makes it richer and more fruitful by the neighborhood of as much of the Old-World treasure as he can get and use.

Again, as we have seen, the people is comparatively homogeneous, so that the local characteristics of American cities—and their literary and artistic resources, for they all accumulate æsthetic wealth

under similar conditions—do not differ as in the case of European cities, even of the minor class. Florence differs from Rome, or Edinburgh from London, more than Boston from New York; and the literary man cannot find in all America, backgrounds as different from each other as that of Paris is different from Berlin. That the greater American cities and their contents are unlike, and that they have individual characters, is very true; but their unlikeness is comparatively slight, for the reason that their development has sprung from like conditions. This is the reason why the American man of letters, and especially the later American novelist, so often writes about European scenes and characters. His nation is isolated; and therefore he often treats of the foreign background and environment. But he looks at them in an American way, and the mind of his books is native and unchanged, as far as its point of view is concerned. The American inheritance of English and other European culture has been used in a manner that, with occasional exceptions, is far from imitative. American literature may be described as *isolated inheritance, working freshly.*

Without dwelling further upon the various relations of political, social, and intellectual life in the United States as toward foreign nations (upon all of which relations, it should be said, the prevalent protective tariff has a certain effect, sometimes stimulating, sometimes deadening), we pass to a preliminary survey of some leading influences affecting American literature within the country itself.

Boston.

Boston, the chief city of New England, has always been a centre of political and religious liberality. Two hundred years ago it had its first revolution, and the revolutionary spirit has never ceased to be felt near Faneuil Hall, the Old State-House, and the Old South Church. But its reforms have been grounded in a genuine conservatism. That Boston used to be the literary capital of the United States (though never in the sense in which London and Paris are literary capitals), was due to its academic traditions and social solidity quite as much as to its radicalism. Its religious, political, or literary reformers have usually sprung from a society distinctly conservative. The literature of Boston and Massachusetts is grounded in the past, and has come, for the most part, from representatives of old families. Longfellow, Lowell, Emerson, Holmes, Everett, Prescott, Motley, Hawthorne, Wendell Phillips, and Charles Sumner, were sons of aristocrats, in the best sense, and were developed in the slow processes of an old culture in an old home. Their poems, essays, speeches, histories, and romances were evolved by quiet growth in long-settled community-life, rich in many ways, two centuries old in mere time, and older than that in direct descent of influences. Boston culture readily assimilated Carlyle and Goethe and the "time-spirit" of 1825, but it was in no sense created by them. The pulse of genius stirred its blood, but the blood had been purified through years of scholarly thought and life. For this reason American literature, when it really began to live,

grew quickly in Boston, but not because of any temporary influences there exerted. As the same or similar conditions have been found elsewhere in America, like results have followed. Boston dared be radical, because it felt the weight of scholarship and social conservatism behind it. Its idealism had a real foundation.

Aristocracy and Democracy.

It should by no means be said that a high and noble *career* in America can only come from the older, conservative, and highly developed regions, such as New England or Virginia. The whole history of the country refutes such an assertion. Many a poor, or lowly-born, or uneducated man has emerged from early circumstances like those of President Lincoln, and has risen to eminence and deserved renown. No country in the world offers to its poor young men better chances for success in politics, business, or some of the walks of professional life. But literature usually comes from the middle and higher social classes. A Robert Burns is an exception in the literary history of any nation; and peasant authors are really as rare in democratic America as in aristocratic England. This remark applies to all parts of the United States. Take, for instance, twenty prominent names in American literature and thought—Cotton Mather, Edwards, Franklin, Jefferson, Irving, Cooper, Longfellow, Whittier, Bryant, Lowell, Holmes, Poe, Emerson, Hawthorne, Bancroft, Webster, Calhoun, James, Cable, and Whitman. Of these, thirteen were of New England birth (Poe, though born in Boston, was really a Southerner), four natives of the Middle

States, and three of the Southern. Of these, Franklin, Whittier, Webster, and Whitman were the only ones whose early circumstances were forbidding, and the parents of all four were intelligent and locally prominent,—by no means of the illiterate class. Fourteen of the twenty were college bred; of the others, Irving and Henry James, Jr., had exceptional advantages in youth, while Whittier and Whitman were country editors. A similar intellectual environment surrounded the lesser American authors. There is no aristocracy in the United States save that of righteousness, intelligence, and good-breeding, handed down from father to son; but from this aristocracy the literature of the nation has sprung.

Libraries.

Public libraries are numerous in the cities and larger towns of the New England States; and the influence of these libraries upon the production of literature is marked. The city of Boston has in its public library, supported by taxation as well as by gifts, more volumes than there are inhabitants in the city. Sometimes a similar admirable showing can be made by smaller New England cities. In Hallowell, Maine, with a population of 3,000, there is a library of 5,000 volumes. The manufacturing and laboring classes use the New England libraries to a considerable extent, and sometimes produce books themselves. A large printing establishment at Cambridge has both a library and a savings-bank for its workmen. In a watch factory at Waltham some 1500 are employed, two thirds of whom are women and girls. "These girls, who are all Americans, are as notably superior in intelligence and education to

ordinary work-girls as the machines they superintend are superior to ordinary machinery. The works of standard authors are to be found on many work benches, to be read in the hour for luncheon ; and a recent visitor noticed that one of the girls had a Greek Testament on her bench, which she read in the intervals of her labor." * There is also an observatory connected with this factory, the astronomer being a young woman. In a well-ordered New England community " the mill, the school-house, the public library, and the church stand side by side." Centres of thought and culture are not to be found only on the New England seaboard. Cities and towns in the Middle and Western States similarly provide themselves with libraries and museums. Little colleges, of humble intellectual grade and of narrow means, abound in many States, and combine the work of the academy, the first year or two of the university, and the public library. Farmers, mechanics, and working-women in the United States, in many instances, read a daily paper, hear an occasional lecture, subscribe to a respectable magazine, and read and buy literature of a tolerably high order. The authors of Europe and America have a public in Western and Southern States not yet accounted literary in their product. But writing follows reading, and the field of literature moves westward as truly as the centre of population in successive census-maps. In all the intellectual life of America, as too often in its physical, is hurry, worry, nervousness, imperfection, waste ; but achievement also, and unmistakable promise.

* Report in the *New York Evening Post.*

Literature in the South.

If literature in the Northern States may be called isolated, still more so has been that of the South. The planter-life, the semi-baronial system, the sharp distinction of classes (even among the whites), the absence of large towns or centres of culture —all these things have tended to give the South a literature of its own. Even publishers have been lacking in its cities, and the intellectual product has been chiefly carried to Northern presses, thence to be returned for home production, in large part. The South has not lacked the power of leadership, intellectual strength, culture, local pride, external inspiration; but it has not equalled the North in literary productiveness, especially of the higher class. This fact it formerly ascribed, too often, to the jealousy, or perverseness, or dulness of Northern critics, who, it asserted, formed mutual-admiration societies to crush Southern genius. Edgar A. Poe wrote of Edward Coate Pinkney: "It was the misfortune of Mr. Pinkney to have been born too far south. Had he been a New Englander, it is probable that he would have been marked as the first of American lyrists, by that magnanimous cabal which has so long controlled the destinies of American Letters, in conducting the thing called the *North American Review*." The spirit of colonialism which so long existed in the North, as toward England, was felt in the South, as toward the North. The colonial spirit is sometimes despondent, sometimes arrogant and self-asserting; and Southerners have veered between the two extremes, in considering their literary position. Many a Southern private library

is rich in eighteenth-century classics, and its owner has read and duly appreciated the best writers in English literature: Shakespeare, Dryden, Addison, Gray, Goldsmith, Gibbon, Scott, Wordsworth, or even Thackeray; but beside these he has too often put some local scribbler or "poetess," whose patriotism, or localism, was better than the literary product. The Southern critic has made too much of the idea of State pride, and has favored the sectional when he ought to have encouraged the universal.

These conditions, which have hitherto handicapped the literature of the Southern States, have become modified since the war. The South now has a considerable and increasing share in the making of American (not Southern) literature; and her writers of the higher class are able and willing to rest their claims for fame upon their works, rather than upon their place of birth or residence. Mr. Cable, the first Southern writer since the war, and the one whose books gain most from their source and scene, would be the last to claim any attention *because* he is a "Southerner" or Louisianian. The future literature of the South will be abundantly able to take care of itself, whatever Northern critics or Southern adulators may say. With the removal of slavery and the development of education, inventive genius appears, factories and schools and libraries rise side by side, and literature begins to share in the strength once monopolized by law and politics.*

* "Webster is ours as well as Clay; Everett and Sumner are ours as truly as Randolph and Calhoun. Is not Irving ours, and Prescott, and Halleck, no less than Poe? The honored Hawthorne is ours, Emerson is ours, Longfellow is ours. . . . The South should no longer dream of a

The environment remains as it was, in physical characteristics, now lovely, now enervating; but the stimulus to literary production is keener. Larger Southern cities, with libraries and literary centres; Southern schools and universities (Johns Hopkins University belongs to the South); and best of all the consolidation of the nation since the war, and the spirit of industry which has risen since the abolition of slavery, will work out a wholesome result. Other States than Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina will have a considerable literary product,—a quickening such as has already been seen in Louisiana and Tennessee.

Literature in the United States.

Looking at the American nation as a whole, with special reference to its capacities for literary production, the general conclusion must be a favorable one. In the United States work is too often hurried, and workers do not seem to know what rest and recuperation are. Money-getting is a prevalent mania, and when a man dies his success is sometimes measured by his fortune, not his intellectual achievement. A certain type of American neglects æsthetics while he pursues mammon; he turns away from present good, while he strives for future gain; he cares less for home, church, school, litera-

separate literature. While treating home subjects, let it be done for the whole nation; and you shall put your own State, not the less, but the more, in your debt; earn a double portion of her gratitude and love; add to these the general thanks of a vast country; and give the sisterhood of States a new interest in that sister whom you delight to call your mother and who will be proud to call you her son. . . . We want to purge ourselves of provincialism, and stop speaking of 'the new South';—what we must have in view is the 'no South.'"—GEORGE W. CABLE, Commencement Address at the University of Mississippi, 1882.

ture, than for a "successful life," in the narrowest sense. He overworks and dies too soon, and after a dreary and material existence he enriches his family or endows a theological seminary, or very likely leaves a bankrupt's memory. To him the hotel has been more than the library, the stock-exchange better than the poem. He has benefited literature indirectly, if at all, and has got from it no good save the remote memory of school-day "reading-books," and the mixed instruction afforded by the daily newspaper. Such Americans have been depicted in novels a thousand times, duly described by Herbert Spencer, and delicately satirized by Matthew Arnold. They have existed, and they now exist. Missing the true meaning of life, they do not create or develop that literature which springs only from large and true life. Again, America has a criminal class, a great body of ignorant voters, a fashion of irreverence, a fondness for display, a subservient and title-hunting tendency strangely at variance with its better spirit of liberty. Fifty million people, in a republic based upon the most liberal plan of suffrage, must include the vicious, the ignorant, the extravagant, the plutocrat, the demagogue and his following. But when we take the larger view, when we study the general spirit and the average result, when we estimate in the severest way the state-craft, social economy, scientific product, education, and books of the nation, the whole, to say the least, compares favorably with the presentation made by any other land in the same period. American literature is the literature of a cultured

and genuine Democracy, a sort of Saxon-Greek renaissance in the New World; a liberty that is as far removed from anarchy as it is from despotism. If such a literature cannot exist and be true and grow great, then all the predictions of wise men from Plato to Milton, from Cicero to Victor Hugo, have been at fault.

CHAPTER III.

EARLY DESCRIPTIVE AND HISTORICAL WRITERS.

CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH was born in Willoughby by Alford, Lincolnshire, England, in January, 1579 (O. S.), having been baptized on the ninth day of that month. He was not a university graduate, and evidently had little education of the academic kind. By nature and by early choice he was a wanderer, pioneer, fighter, egotist. He served in the French army at the age of seventeen; fought in the Dutch army for three years in the Netherlands; was shipwrecked when twenty-one; travelled extensively on the Continent; was a soldier under Sigismund Bathori against the Turks in Transylvania, where, he claimed, he killed three Turks in single-combat; was, according to his own story, caught and enslaved in Constantinople; returned to England by way of Africa; and could call himself a battle-scarred veteran and an experienced traveller at twenty-five. The mania for colonization and enrichment in America was prevalent in London; Smith made the acquaintance of Bartholomew Gosnold, caught Gosnold's enthusiasm, and set sail with the adventurers and intending settlers who left London in three ships on December 19, 1606. On the voyage

John Smith, 1579–1631.

he was arrested on the charge that he designed to kill his fellow-leaders and make himself "king of Virginia"; but he was released when the shores of Jamestown were reached, thereby, he assures us, escaping the "gallows," but temporarily losing his membership in the council of seven managers. He carefully explored interior Virginia and Chesapeake Bay; quarrelled with, sued, or executed several prominent colonists; and once more narrowly escaped condemnation to death. He finally quit Virginia in September, 1609, after two years of zeal, turmoil, and discovery, in which his services to the colony were great and of lasting value. Five years later he explored the New England coast, of which he made a map, and started to return thither with the idea of founding a colony in New England, in 1615. But captured by a French man-of-war off Flores, he was transported to Rochelle, after which his immediate career is doubtful. In 1616, having escaped, and receiving from James I. the title of "Admiral of New England," he actively turned his attention to book-making, chiefly with the unselfish idea of furthering schemes of American colonization. His influence upon subsequent Pilgrim and Puritan settlement in New England was considerable, but he reaped little material advantage from his incessant labors. He died in London in 1631, aged fifty-two, after a brave, intensely active, romantic, tolerably chivalrous, and, on the whole, decidedly useful life. His zeal was greater than his discretion, and his industry was often fruitless; but as an explorer and describer of American men, soil, and possibilities

his service to the nascent colonies was unquestionable. This bald list of his adventures, discoveries, and doings explains his prominence in the American history of the seventeenth century.

His voluminous writings deserve but a humble place in literature. Strictly speaking, they are a part of English, not American, literature, for Smith's continuous residence on American soil was a matter of but two years' lasting; and, all told, he was in the New World but two years and eight months. It is uncertain what share Smith had in the writing of the works passing under his name; some of his assertions (as the famous legend of the rescue of his life by Pocahontas) are questionable, and others demonstrably false. At their best, his books lack high literary merit, and are material for the historian rather than the critic. The list of productions under his name is as follows:

A True Relation of such occurrences and accidents of noate as hath hapned in Virginia since the first planting of that Collony, which is now resident in the South part thereof, till the last return from thence. [Final title-page.] Written by Captain Smith, Coronell of the said Collony, to a worshipfull friend of his in England. London, 1608.

A Map of Virginia. With a Description of the Countrey, the Commodities, People, Government, and Religion. Written by Captaine Smith, sometimes Governour of the Countrey. Whereunto is annexed the proceedings of those Colonies, since their first departure from England, etc., by W. S[immonds, D.D.]. Oxford, 1612.

A Description of New England: or the observations, and Discoueries, of Captain Iohn Smith (Admirall of that Country) in the North of America, in the year of our Lord 1614: with the successe of sixe Ships, that went the next yeare 1615; and the accidents befell him among the French men of warre: with the proofe of the present benefit this Countrey affoords; whither this present yeare, 1616, eight voluntary Ships are gone to make further tryall. London, 1616.

New Englands Trials. Declaring the successe of 26. Ships employed thither within these sixe yeares: with the benefit of that Countrey by sea and land: and how to build threescore sayle of good Ships, to make a little Navie Royal. Written by Captaine Iohn Smith. London, 1620.

New Englands Trials. Declaring the successe of 80 Ships employed thither within these eight yeares; and the benefit of that countrey by Sea and Land. With the present estate of that happie Plantation, begun but by 60 weake men in the yeare 1620. And how to build a Fleete of good Shippes to make a little Nauie Royall. Written by Captain Iohn Smith, somtimes Gouernour of Virginia, and Admirall of New England. The second edition. London, 1622.

The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles, with the names of the Adventurers, Planters, and Governours from their first beginning An: 1584, to this present 1624, with the Proceedings of those Severall Colonies and the Accidents that befell them in all their Journeys and Dis-

coueries. Also the Maps and Descriptions of all those Countryes, their Commodities, people, Government, Customes, and Religion yet knowne. Divided into sixe Bookes. By Captaine Iohn Smith, sometymes Governour of those Countryes & Admirall of New England. London, 1624.

An Accidence or the Path-way to Experience. Necessary for all Young Sea-men, or those that are desirous to goe to Sea, briefly shewing the Phrases, Offices, and Words of Command, Belonging to the Building, Ridging, and Sayling a Man of Warre; and how to manage a Fight at Sea. Together with the Charge and Duty of every Officer, and their Shares: also the Names, Weight, Charge, Shot, and Powder, of all sorts of great Ordnance. With the use of the Petty Tally. Written by Captaine Iohn Smith sometimes Governour of Virginia, and Admirall of New England. London, 1626.

The True Travels, Adventures, and Observations of Captaine Iohn Smith, in Europe, Asia, Affrica, and America, from Anno Domini 1593 to 1629. His Accidents and Sea-fights in the Straights; his Service and Stratagems of warre in Hungaria, Transilvania, Wallachia, and Moldavia, against the Turks, and Tartars; his three single combats betwixt the Christian Armie and the Turkes. After how he was taken prisoner by the Turks, sold for a Slave, sent into Tartaria; his description of the Tartars, their strange manners and customes of Religions, Diets, Buildings, Warres, Feasts, Ceremonies, and Living; how hee slew the Bashaw of Nalbrits in Cambia, and escaped from the Turkes and Tartars. Together

with a continuation of his generall History of Virginia, Summer-Isles, New England, and their proceedings, since 1624. to this present 1629; as also of the new Plantations of the great River of the Amazons, the Isles of St. Christopher, Mevis, and Barbados in the West Indies. All written by actuall Authours, whose names you shall finde along the History. London, 1630.

Advertisements For the unexperienced Planters of New-England, or any where. Or The Path-way to experience to erect a Plantation. With the yearely proceedings of this Country in Fishing and Planting, since the yeare 1614. to the yeare 1630. and their present estate. Also how to prevent the greatest inconveniences, by their proceedings in Virginia, and other Plantations, by approved examples. With the Countries Armes, a description of the Coast, Harbours, Habitations, Land-markes, Latitude and Longitude: with the Map, allowed by our Royal King Charles. By Captaine Iohn Smith, sometimes Governour of Virginia, and Admirall of New England. London, 1631.

These cumbersome and almost illiterate title-pages are here reproduced because they sufficiently indicate, perhaps, the extent and range of the author's literary productions, and are also an index to his character, and an epitome of his life. The "Generall Historie of Virginia" comes the nearest to the border-line of pure literature, while the "Accidence for Young Seamen" is the farthest from that line. Sometimes Smith's narrative is strong, and it could not fail to be picturesque on occasion; but its main

value is that of historical material. When we consider that Smith wrote in the time of Bacon and Shakespeare (one of his letters to "Sir Ffrances Bacon" has been preserved) we perceive that so rude a writer could hardly hope to do more than interest his contemporaries by his matter rather than his manner. Indeed, the literary quality of his thousand printed pages is inferior to that of "The Voiage and Travaile of Sir John Maundevile, Kt., which treateth of the way to Hierusalem, and of marvayles of Inde, with other ilands and countryes," written three hundred years before, in a period of depression in English literature. Smith and Maundevile were alike in their tendency to embellish and magnify the *magna pars fui*, and both made up by touches of romance for what they lacked in the sober field of history.

A passage from New England's Trials may be cited, as affording a fair example of Smith's method and style:

> Here I must intreate a little your fauours to digresse. They did not kill the English because they were Christians, but for their weapons and commodities, they were rare nouelties; but now they feare we may beate them out of their dens, which Lions and Tygers would not admit but by force. But must this be an argument for an English man, or discourage any other in *Virginia* or *New England?* No: for I haue tried them both.
>
> For *Virginia*, I kept that country with 38, and had not to eate but what we had from the sauages. When I had ten men able to go abroad, our common wealth was very strong: with such a number I ranged that vnknown country 14 weeks; I had but 18 to subdue them all, with

which great army I stayed six weekes before their greatest Kings habitations, till they had gathered together all the power they could; and yet the Dutch-men sent at a needlesse excessiue charge did helpe Powhatan how to betray me.

Of their numbers we were vncertaine; but them two honorable gentlemen (Captaine *George Percie* and Captaine *Francis West*, two of the *Phittiplaces*, and some other such noble gentlemen and resolute spirits bore their shares with me, and now liuing in *England*) did see me take this murdering *Opechankanough* now their great King by the long locke on his head; with my pistole at his breast, I led him among his greatest forces, and before we parted made him fill our Bark of twenty Tuns with corne. When their owne wants was such, I haue giuen them part againe in pittie, and others haue bought it againe to plant their fields.

For wronging a souldier but the value of a peny, I haue caused *Powhatam* send his owne men to *Iames* Towne to receiue their punishment at my discretion. It is true in our greatest extremitie they shot me, slue three of my men, and by the folly of them that fled tooke me prisoner; yet God made *Pocahontas* the Kings daughter the meanes to deliuer me: and thereby taught me to know their trecheries to preserue the rest.

It was also my chance in single combat to take the King of *Paspahegh* prisoner: and by keeping him, forced his subiects to worke in chaines till I made all the country pay contribution; hauing little else whereon to liue.

Twise in this time I was their President, and none can say in all that time I had a man slaine: but for keeping them in that feare I was much blamed both there and here: yet I left 500 behind me that, through their confidence, in six months came most to confusion, as you may reade at large in the description of *Virginia*.

When I went first to these desperate designes, it cost me many a forgotten pound to hire men to go, and pro-

crastination caused more run away than went. But after the ice was broken, came many braue voluntaries; notwithstanding since I came from thence, the honorable Company haue bin humble suiters to his Maiestie to get vagabands and condemned men to go thither; nay so much scorned was the name of *Virginia*, some did chuse to be hanged ere they would go thither, and were: yet for all the worst of spite, distraction, and discouragement, and this lamentable massacre, there is more honest men now suters to go, then euer hath bin constrained knaues; and it is not vnknown to most men of understanding, how happie many of those Collumners doe thinke themselues, that they might be admitted, and yet pay for their passage to go now to *Virginia*: and had I but meanes to transport as many as would go, I might haue choise of 10000 that would gladly be in any of those new places, which were so basely contemned by vngrateful base minds.

To range this countrey of *New England* in like maner I had but eight, as is said, and amongst their bruite conditions I met many of their silly incounters, and without any hurt, God be thanked; when your West country men were many of them wounded and much tormented with the sauages that assaulted their ship, as they did say themselues, in the first yeare I was there 1614; and though Master *Hunt*, then Master with me, did most basely in stealing some sauages from that coast to sel, when he was directed to haue gone for Spaine: yet that place was so remote from *Capawuck*, where *Epenew* should haue fraughted them with gold ore, his fault could be no cause of their bad successe, howeuer it is alledged for an excuse. I speake not this out of vain glory, as it may be some gleaners, or some was neuer there may censure me: but to let all men be assured by those examples, what those sauages are, that thus strangely doe murder and betray our countrey men.

Smith's works may be taken as samples of many

narrations of experiences and observations in the New World, written by numerous hands during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some of these other recorders wrote better than Smith, some worse; it is enough to say that their chronicles—with the exception of a few which we shall next proceed to examine—deserve, like Smith's, attention from the antiquarian or the general historian, not from the historian of American literature.

The first chronicler of doings in New England—William Bradford—was a man unlike Smith in character. Instead of adventure, romance, brilliant personal exploits, excitement, and disquietude, there were in his life calmness, patience, perseverance, and faithful devotion to the duties of his station. As a cavalier, Bradford could make no figure at all comparable with Smith's; but if his natural capacities were smaller, his steadfastness and serenity were much greater. He was also master of a better English style.

William Bradford, 1588–1657.

William Bradford was born in March, 1588, in Austerfield, Yorkshire, that English district which has been the birthplace of not a few great men and sound reforms. A farmer's son, he never enjoyed that Cambridge education which served other early New Englanders in such good stead. The thoughtful boy adopted the Puritan faith, and was a member of John Robinson's congregation in Amsterdam, Holland. He was one of the company which sailed to Plymouth, Massachusetts, in the *Mayflower*, in 1620; and though, at the very beginning of Puritan settlement in the New World, Mrs. Bradford was

drowned, her husband devoutly bowed to his God and went on with undiminished courage in his lonely work—until he married again. On April 5, 1621, he was elected second governor of Plymouth Colony. From this time until his death in 1657, Bradford was annually reëlected every year save five, on which he declined to accept the burdensome honor. As chief magistrate, he wrought a good work for the young colony, by a union of firmness and gentleness, of foresight and common sense. The Indian problem was of course the one most urgently demanding solution. When a chief took advantage of a famine in the colony to send a bundle of arrows tied in a serpent's skin, Bradford returned the skin crammed with powder and bullets. But if Bradford knew how to be bold, he was equally skilled in the arts of diplomacy. His management of the affairs of his colony was discreet as regards its internal affairs, its relations towards its neighbors of Massachusetts Bay, and its obligations to the home government in England.

Bradford's claim to mention here, however, is based not upon his sagacious management of his little colony—which, though it preceded Massachusetts Bay in point of time, never equalled it in importance—but upon his "History of Plymouth Plantation," the principal one of his historical and doctrinal writings. This is a plain and straightforward record of the doings at Plymouth down to the year 1646. It chronicles those things which Bradford did or saw, and while it is always written from the standpoint of the Pilgrim Separatist, and with

the interests of Plymouth constantly in view, it may fairly be called impartial. Its writer, though not a university man, had acquired a respectable education, and was a wide reader; and he was, therefore, able to tell his story in a more methodical and pleasing manner than is visible in any of Smith's books. Furthermore, Bradford was modest in the quaint Puritan fashion, with its curious union of spiritual exaltation and personal depreciation; and his record bears with it all the marks of credibility.

The story begins with an account of the evils of the prelatical system in the Church of England; details the commencement of Puritan separatism, after unavailing protest; presents a sad picture of Episcopal persecution of early Independents; and then proceeds to tell of the emigration to Holland in search of religious freedom, of the failure there, of the final transfer to the shores of Massachusetts, and of the establishment and career of the colony. Inspired by piety, the Pilgrims ever trusted in God, and Bradford's Pilgrim Anabasis is marked on every page with the signs of a spirit strong because devout. The comforts of religion were needed in the long battle for a foothold on the new soil; and Bradford, without abating his stern zeal, and indeed because of it, succeeds in interesting and profiting his readers. His book of annals, unlike most works in this useful but dreary department of book-making, can be read through without much weariness. For the critical reader it has some interest; for the political historian it is a very valuable document.

But Bradford's "History" is, after all, a document

merely. It contains pieces of good writing, yet on the whole it does not rise to the rank of historical literature. We must go to it before we can correctly analyze the noble character of the first settlers of Massachusetts; and in this historical and character study we may get, incidentally, some purely literary pleasure. But Bradford was a forerunner of literature, not a historian. He stands not as an early Palfrey or Bancroft, but ranks with the useful company of annalists, diarists, and autobiographers, few of whom have equalled him in strength of character and fidelity of purpose. He was the first Pilgrim writer in America, the first recorder of doings in New England, and a story-teller of considerable power, as well as of absolute truthfulness in matters of fact. New England may congratulate itself that its early settlements were described by Bradford and Winthrop in contemporary accounts as faithful and as truly original as the Anglo-Saxon chronicle, though in literary merit inferior to that plain masterpiece of early English.

This History makes evident some facts not yet generally familiar: that among the early Puritans were some mean fellows, criminals, jealous rivals, meddlesome intruders, and selfish money-makers. Plymouth, as he describes it, was a human community, with the imperfections of humanity. Now and then these faults and foibles Bradford describes with that sort of humor which is usually called "grim." A poetical flavor also appears, as in the description of the departure from Leyden: "So being ready to departe, they had a day of solleme humilia-

tion, their pastor taking his texte from Ezra 8. 21, '*And there*, at ye river, by Ahava, I proclaimed a fast, that we might humble ourselves before our God, and seeke of him a right way for us, and for our children, and for all our substance.' Upon which he spente a good parte of ye day very profitably, and suitable to their presente occasion. The rest of the time was spente in powering out prairs to ye Lord with great fervencie, mixed with abundance of tears. And ye time being come when they must departe, they were acompanied with most of their brethren out of ye citie, unto a towne sundrie miles of called Delfes-Haven, wher the ship lay ready to receive them. So they lefte yt goodly & pleasante citie, which had been ther resting place near 12. years ; but they knew they were pilgrimes, & looked not much on those things, but lift up their eyes to ye heavens, their dearest cuntrie, and quieted their spirits." This little passage, perhaps the gem in Bradford's writings, is high and true, and is poetical prose, even in the unconscious humor of the phrase: " upon which he spent a good part of the day very profitably." Is there not in it the spirit, and something of the style, of Milton's prose, later in the seventeenth century? Milton (whose prose, even in the " Areopagitica," is so far inferior to his poetry) need not have been ashamed of Bradford's introductory words :

Of Plimoth Plantation.—And first of ye occasion and indūsments there unto ; the which that I may truly unfould, I must begine at ye very roote & rise of ye same. The which I shall endevor to manefest in a plaine stile, with

singuler regard unto ye simple trueth in all things, at least as near as my slender judgement can attaine the same.

1. Chapter.—It is well knowne unto ye godly and judicious, how ever since ye first breaking out of ye lighte of ye gospell in our Honourable Nation of England, (which was ye first of nations whom ye Lord adorned ther with, affter yt grosse darknes of popery which had covered & overspred ye Christian worled,) what warrs & opposissions ever since, Satan hath raised, maintained, and continued against the Saincts, from time to time, in one sorte or other. Some times by bloody death and cruell torments; other whiles imprisonments, banishments, & other hard usages; as being loath his kingdom should goe downe, the trueth prevaile, and ye churches of God reverte to their anciente puritie, and recover their primative order, libertie, and bewtie. But when he could not prevaile by these means against the maine trueths of ye gospell, but that they began to take rootting in many places, being watered with ye blooud of ye martires, and blessed from heaven with a gracious encrease; he then begane to take him to his anciente strategemes, used of old against the first Christians. That when by ye bloody & barbarous persecutions of ye Heathen Emperours, he could not stoppe and subuerte the course of ye gospell, but that it speedily overspread with a wonderfull celeritie the then best known parts of ye world, he then began to sow errours, heresies, and wounderfull dissentions amongst ye professours themselves (working upon their pride & ambition, with other corrupte passions incidente to all mortall men, yea to ye saints them selves in some measure,) by which wofull effects followed; as not only bitter contentions, & hart burnings, schismes, with other horrible confusions, but Satan tooke occasion & advantage therby to foyst in a number of vile ceremoneys, with many unprofitable cannons and decrees, which have since been as snares to many poore & peaceable souls, even to this day.

Bradford then mentions the persecutions of Christians by heathen, and of "orthodoxe & true Christians" by "Arians & other their complices"; says nothing of orthodox persecution of Arianism; and declares that "when as yt old serpente could not prevaile by those firie flames & other his cruell tragedies, which he by his instruments put in use every wher in ye days of queene Mary & before, he then begane an other kind of warre, and went more closly to worke; not only to oppuggen, but even to ruinate & destroy ye kingdom of Christ, by more secrete and subtile means, by kindling ye flames of contention and sowing ye seeds of discord & bitter enmitie amongst ye proffessors and seeming reformed them selves." The controversy, in Bradford's opinion, was between "ye ceremonies, & servise-booke, and other popish antichristian stuffe, the plague of England to this day, which are like ye high-plases in Israell," and "ye right worship of God & discipline of Christ established in ye church, according to ye simplicitie of ye gospell, without the mixture of mens inventions, . . . ruled by ye laws of Gods word, dispensed in those offices, & by those officers of Pastors, Teachers, & Elders, &c. according to ye Scripturs." *

* Pp. 1–4 of "History of Plymouth Plantation," by William Bradford, the second governor of the colony. Now first printed from the original manuscript for the Massachusetts Historical Society. [Edited by Charles Deane.] Boston: Published for the Society by Little, Brown, & Co., 1856.

This book can itself boast a romantic history. Never printed in the author's day, Nathaniel Morton, Bradford's nephew, used large parts of it in "New England's Memorial," 1669; Thomas Prince employed it in his "Chronological History of New England"; Thomas Hutchinson quoted it in the "History of Massachusetts Bay"; it was stolen from Prince's library

No wonder that Bradford eloquently exclaimed, after the rise of the commonwealth in England :

Full little did I think that the downfall of the bishops, with their courts, canons, and ceremonies, had been so near when I first began this writing, which was about the year 1630, and so pieced at leisure times afterwards, or that I should have lived to have seen or heard of the same. But it is the Lord's doing, and ought to be marvellous in our eyes. "Every plant which mine heavenly Father hath not planted," saith our Saviour, "shall be rooted up." "I have snared thee, and thou art taken, O Babel (bishops), and thou wast not aware: thou art found and also caught, because thou hast striven against the Lord." But will they needs strive against the truth, against the servants of the Lord, what! and against the Lord himself? Do they provoke the Lord to anger? Are they stronger than he? No, no, they have met with their match. Behold, I come against thee, O proud men, saith the Lord God of hosts; for thy day is coming, even the time that I will visit thee. May not the people of God now say, and these poor people among the rest: The Lord hath brought forth our righteousness: come, let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God. Let all flesh be still before the Lord, for he is raised up out of his holy place.

This poor people may say among the thousands of Israel, When the Lord brought again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we rejoice. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. They went weeping and carried precious seed; but they shall return with joy, and bring their sheaves.

in the Old South Church, Boston, by British troops during the Revolution; Alexander Young found a copy of a part of it, in Morton's handwriting, in the records of the First Church, Plymouth, about 1835; and finally the whole was discovered in 1855, in the Bishop of London's library at Fulham.

Do ye not now see the fruits of your labors, O all ye servants of the Lord that have suffered for his truth, and have been faithful witnesses of the same? And ye little handful amongst the rest, the least amongst the thousands of Israel? You have not had a seed-time, but many of you have seen a joyful harvest. Should ye not then rejoice, yea, again rejoice, and say, Hallelujah, salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, be to the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments.

But thou wilt ask, What is the matter? What is done? Why art thou a stranger in Israel, that thou shouldest not know what is done? Are not those Jebusites overcome, that have vexed the people of Israel so long, even holding Jerusalem even until David's days, and been as thorns in their sides for many ages, and now began to scorn that not any David should meddle with them; they began to fortify their tower, as that of the old Babylonians. But these proud Anakims are now thrown down, and their glory laid in the dust. The tyrannous bishops are ejected, their courts dissolved, their canons forceless, their service-books cashiered, their ceremonies useless and despised, their plots for Popery prevented, and all their superstitions discarded, and returned to Rome, from whence they came; and the monuments of idolatry rooted out of the land, and the proud and profane supporters and cruel defenders of these, as bloody papists, wicked atheists, and their malignant consorts, marvellously over thrown. And are not these great things? Who can deny it?

But who hath done it? Even he that sitteth on the white horse, who is called Faithful and True, and judgeth and fighteth righteously, whose garments are dipped in blood, and his name was called The Word of God; for he shall rule them with a rod of iron; for it is he that treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God; and he hath upon his garment and upon his thigh

a name written, The King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Hallelujah! *

Bradford, who died May 9, 1657, did not live to see the restoration of the Church of England, and of kingly government.

It is easy enough to accuse Bradford of bitterness and bigotry; and moralizers at his expense may record the fact that the ancient church transferred from Holland to Plymouth, has become Unitarian, like nearly all the churches established by the Pilgrims and Puritans in Massachusetts. But we cannot lay down his writings without feeling that we have been in the presence of a strong, sincere, and useful man.

Edward Winslow, whose writings are entitled to a brief consideration, was a fellow-passenger of Bradford's on the famous voyage of the *Mayflower*. He was the author of several books of his own, and part-writer of a journal kept in conjunction with the more famous author of the History of Plymouth Plantation. Winslow was a native of Worcestershire, England, and was but twenty-five years old when he emigrated to America,—not half as old as Elder William Brewster, and younger than either Robinson or Bradford. Like so many of the Pilgrims and Puritans, he could boast of good birth, if he cared to do so. After receiving a fair education, he adopted Puritan principles at an early age, like Bradford, and joined the congregation at Leyden

Edward Winslow, 1595–1655.

* Bradford (spelling modernized), quoted by Nathaniel Morton (1669), in "An Introduction to the Ecclesiastical History of the Church of Christ at Plymouth, in New England."—The text cited is that given in Alexander Young's "Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers of the Colony of Plymouth, from 1602 to 1625." Boston, 1841.

through the influence of its pastor, John Robinson, in 1617. By the time the *Mayflower* sailed he had married. The resemblance between the fortunes of Winslow and Bradford is also to be noted in that Winslow's wife died within a few months after her arrival at Plymouth, as by the record for March 24, 1621 : "Dies Elizabeth, the wife of Mr. Edward Winslow." On May 12th the cheerful widower—who doubtless would have regarded as doomed to perdition one who acted in, or even read, George Chapman's play of "The Widdowes Teares"—was the subject of the following record in Bradford and Winslow's Journal : "1621, May 12. The first marriage in this place is of Mr. Edward Winslow, to Mrs. Susanna White, widow of Mr. William White,"—who had died February 21st, previous. This disgraceful union was the first marriage in New England.

Winslow early became prominent in the affairs of the young colony, to which he made himself useful in several ways, not the least of which was the winning of the trust and esteem of the Indian chief Massasoit, whom he succeeded in curing from disease in 1623. In that year Winslow sailed for England as agent of Plymouth Colony, and on his return, brought with him the first live stock. A second voyage and brief stay in England soon followed, and in 1633 Winslow was elected governor of the colony. His greatest diplomatic work, accomplished with no small adroitness, was his appearance before the Council in 1635, where he secured a renewal of the conditions of self-government at Plymouth, en-

dangered by the machinations of persons inimical to the enterprise. But Thomas Morton, the royalist and Episcopalian—of whom we shall presently hear more—secured Winslow's imprisonment in the Fleet, on various charges of alleged law-breaking. Emerging, Winslow was again elected governor in 1636 and 1644, and finally quit Plymouth in 1649, finding enough to do in England under the Cromwellian regime. On May 8, 1655, when on his way to the West Indies, under authority from the Protector, as one of three commissioners to attack Spanish settlements, Winslow died of a fever, and was buried at sea near Jamaica. His career in America and elsewhere was only less romantic than John Smith's, and on the whole was quite as useful.

Winslow was a sufficiently modest chronicler of his sights and doings, his best work—though not his most ambitious—being the journal which he wrote in connection with William Bradford. This journal covers the period from September 6, 1620, before the landing at Plymouth, to the autumn of 1621; and on the whole it is well done, though with little pretence to fine or very careful writing. Truth is everywhere apparent in the record; and the intensity of the writers seldom interfered with their common-sense and discretion. The perils and pleasures of the enterprise; the terrors of Indian warfare; the weather; the appearance and mission of the Indian chief Massasoit; the exploration of the country, and similar matters, are described briefly, clearly, and with some spirit. These Pilgrims had sharp eyes, and this journal contains many a vivid

picture of savage life on the new shore. Common and faithful diarizing need not be asked to do more than does the following account of the first visit from "Massasoit," which is a fair sample of early colonial methods in dealing with the Indians:

Thursday, the 22d of March [1621], was a very fair, warm day. About noon we met again about our public business. But we had scarce been an hour together, but Samoset came again, and Squanto, the only native of Patuxet, where we now inhabit, who was one of the twenty captives that by Hunt were carried away, and had been in England, and dwelt in Cornhill with Master John Slanie, a merchant, and could speak a little English, with three others; and they brought with them some few skins to truck, and some red herrings, newly taken and dried, but not salted; and signified unto us, that their great sagamore, Masasoyt was hard by, with Quadequina, his brother, and all their men. They could not well express in English what they would; but after an hour the king came to the top of a hill over against us, and had in his train sixty men, that we could well behold them, and they us. We were not willing to send our governor to them, and they were unwilling to come to us. So Squanto went again unto him, and brought word that we should send one to parley with him, which we did, which was Edward Winsloe, to know his mind, and to signify the mind and will of our governor, which was to have trading and peace with him. We sent to the king a pair of knives, and a copper chain with a jewel at it. To Quadequina we sent likewise a knife, and a jewel to hang in his ear, and withal a pot of strong water, a good quantity of biscuit, and some butter; which were all willingly accepted.

Our messenger made a speech unto him, that King James saluted him with words of love and peace, and did accept of him as his friend and ally; and that our gover-

nor desired to see him and to truck with him, and to confirm a piece with him, as his next neighbor. He liked well of the speech, and heard it attentively, though the interpreters did not well express it. After he had eaten and drunk himself, and given the rest to his company, he looked upon our messenger's sword and armor, which he had on, with intimation of his desire to buy it; but, on the other side, our messenger showed his unwillingness to part with it. In the end, he left him in the custody of Quadequina, his brother, and came over the brook, and some twenty men following him, leaving all their bows and arrows behind them. We kept six or seven as hostages for our messenger. Captain Standish and Master Williamson met the king at the brook, with half a dozen musketeers. They saluted him, and he them; so one going over, the one on the one side, and the other on the other, conducted him to a house then in building, where we placed a green rug and three or four cushions. Then instantly came our governor, with drum and trumpet after him, and some few musketeers. After salutations, our governor kissing his hand, the king kissed him; and so they sat down. The governor called for some strong water, and drank to him, and he drank a great draught, that make him sweat all the while after. He called for a little fresh meat, which the king did eat willingly, and did give his followers. Then they treated of peace, which was:

1. That neither he nor any of his should injure or do hurt to any of our people.

2. And if any of his did hurt to any of ours, he should send the offender, that we might punish him.

3. That if any of our tools were taken away, when our people were at work, he should cause them to be restored; and if ours did any harm to any of his, we would do the like to them.

4. If any did unjustly war against him, we would aid him; if any did war against us, he should aid us.

5. He should send to his neighbor confederates to certify them of this, that they might not wrong us, but might be likewise comprised in the conditions of peace.

6. That when their men came to us, they should leave their bows and arrows behind them, as we should do our pieces when we came to them.

Lastly, that doing thus, King James would esteem of him as his friend and ally.

All which the king seemed to like well, and it was applauded of his followers. All the while he sat by the governor, he trembled for fear. In his person he is a very lusty man, in his best years, an able body, grave of countenance, and spare of speech; in his attire little or nothing differing from the rest of his followers, only in a great chain of white bone beads about his neck; and at it, behind his neck, hangs a little bag of tobacco, which he drank, and gave us to drink. His face was painted with a sad, red-like murrey, and oiled both head and face, that he looked greasily. All his followers likewise were in their faces, in part or in whole, painted, some black, some red, some yellow, and some white, some with crosses and other antic works; some had skins on them, and some naked; all tall, strong men in appearance.

So, after all was done, the governor conducted him to the brook, and there they embraced each other, and he departed; we diligently keeping our hostages. We expected our messenger's coming; but anon word was brought us that Quadequina was coming, and our messenger was stayed till his return; who presently came, and a troop with him. So likewise we entertained him, and conveyed him to the place prepared. He was very fearful of our pieces, and made signs of dislike, that they should be carried away; whereupon commandment was given they should be laid away. He was a very proper, tall young man, of a very modest and seemly countenance, and he did kindly like of our entertainment. So we conveyed him likewise, as we did the king; but divers of

their people stayed still. When he was returned, then they dismissed our messenger. Two of his people would have stayed all night, but we would not suffer it. One thing I forgot; the king had in his bosom, hanging in a string, a great long knife. He marvelled much at our trumpet, and some of his men would sound it as well as they could. Samoset and Squanto, they stayed all night with us; and the king and all his men lay all night in the woods, not above half an English mile from us, and all their wives and women with them. They said that within eight or nine days they would come and set corn on the other side of the brook, and dwell there all summer; which is hard by us. That night we kept good watch; but there was no appearance of danger.*

It was a fashion, in accounts of New England colonization, prepared for English readers, to add some sponsor's, or some fictitious, name to the work. Thus the address prefixed to Bradford and Winslow's narrative was signed by "G. Mourt," perhaps George Morton, Bradford's brother-in-law. From this contraction or misprint the work was long called "Mourt's Relation."

Of Winslow's other writings, prepared without aid from any other hand, were a "Letter sent from New England to a Friend in these parts, setting forth a brief and true declaration of the worth of that plantation, as also certain useful directions for such as intend a voyage into those parts"; and the two more considerable works whose titles follow:

"Good Newes from New England; or a true Relation of things very remarkable at the Plantation of *Plimoth* in New-England." This was

* Young: "Chronicles of the Pilgrims," pp. 190–195.

printed in London in 1624, and contains sixty-six pages. Its style is plainer and less picturesque than that of Bradford and Winslow's Journal; it describes the perils and progress of the colonists, with some account of the Indians with whom they had to deal, and a statement of the agricultural and commercial prospects of the settlement. The chapters under the two latter heads are the best, being sensible and straightforward statements, such as were needed in England at the time.

"Hypocrisie Vnmasked: By a true Relation of the Proceedings of the Governour and Company of the Massachusets against Samuel Gorton (and his Accomplices,) . . . Whereunto is added a Briefe Narration (occasioned by certain aspersions) of the true grounds or cause of the first Planting of New England; the Precedents of their Churches in the way and worship of God; their Communion with the Reformed Churches; and their practise toward those that dissent from them in matters of Religion and Church Government." London, 1646.

Gorton was a fanatic and mischief-maker who sorely vexed Plymouth, Newport, and Boston in the early half of the seventeenth century, and finally ended his career in Rhode Island, in 1677. Winslow's account of him has no present interest; but the appended relation of the "first planting of New England" is solidly written, and has some substantial value. An account of Christian work among New England Indians, a "platform of church discipline," etc., were additional writings by Winslow. The old colonist's portrait—the only representation of one of

the *Mayflower's* passengers—shows a dignified, solid, and thoughtful countenance, well indexing the character of one who, though scarcely a man of letters, belonged to that noteworthy group of chroniclers who treasured up the records of the early deeds of the settlers of Massachusetts.

By unusual good fortune, it happened that the governors of both Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay left full records of the doings of the colonies under their charge. These records are, as we have said, indispensable to the historical student, and rather interesting to the general reader. Governor John Winthrop's "History of New England" is, on the whole, less graphic and picturesque than Governor William Bradford's "History of Plymouth Plantation"; but it has a smoother and more finished style.

John Winthrop was a native of Suffolk, England, and was born in Groton on January 12, 1587. His father was a lawyer in the metropolis, and the family was one of honorable name and descent. Winthrop, like so many of the Puritan leaders, was a Cambridge man, studying at Trinity College, but losing his degree because of his early marriage. He chose the legal profession, became a justice of the peace, adopted Puritan principles, and became governor of the Massachusetts Bay Company, in England, at the age of forty-two. The ancestral estate in Suffolk was sold soon after; and in 1630 Winthrop and nine hundred colonists, in seventeen vessels, sailed for New England. Among his companions were several who were destined to colonial prominence: Isaac Johnson and his wife, the Lady

John Winthrop, 1587–1649.

Arbella, Thomas Dudley, and Simon Bradstreet. The industrious Winthrop beguiled the tedium of the voyage by writing a booklet called "A Model of Christian Charity." The landing was at Salem, in June, but the settlement and church, with Rev. John Wilson as pastor, were ultimately started at Charlestown, and thence transferred to Boston in September, 1630. Winthrop was the leading spirit from the first, and was repeatedly chosen governor by a sort of natural right. In 1636 Sir Harry Vane supplanted him in that office, and a few other years he did not serve, but he was chief magistrate the greater part of the time until his death. Early in 1649 Winthrop established and maintained relations, on the whole, friendly, with Plymouth, the Indians, and the home government, and his management of the affairs of the colony was successful, though the Antinomians or Hutchinsonians were vexatious, and certain sharp jealousies existed between Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth—jealousies in which the greater blame belonged to the former. Neither Massachusetts nor Plymouth was free from backbitings, burnings, scramblings for selfish advantage, and the other ills that infest new settlements; and they were annoyed by those fanatics who always hang upon any reform movement. With them, also, had come a low criminal class. Their success was largely due to the efficiency and discretion of their governors, whose modest records tell us both of trouble and of triumph. To say that Winthrop's strong and well-balanced character was marred by occasional superstition and intolerance, is but to

say that he was human, and a seventeenth-century Puritan.

Winthrop's brief treatise, "A Model of Christian Charity," written on shipboard, need not long detain the literary student. It was one of the many religious tracts produced during the Puritan revival in England and America, and it surpassed some of its fellows in spirit and execution. It applied particularly to the future work of the Massachusetts settlers, whom it advised to be self-sacrificing, patient, and liberal, working fraternally for the general welfare. Had its counsels been more strictly heeded, the colony would have escaped some of its faults and trials. Winthrop was an intelligent man, and familiar with some part of the English literature of his day; thus he called George Wither "our modern spirit of poetry"; and he did not do discredit to the general spirit of intelligence which pervaded the Puritan movement. His letters—even those of affection—were written in a somewhat stately style, and abounded in religious allusions and Biblical quotations. The literary style of the leading settlers of New England, it may be said here, was materially indebted to their familiarity with the grandeur and poetry of the Bible. They were well acquainted with the Geneva version, and the King James' translation had recently appeared. The letters of the Puritans almost seemed like copies of the New Testament epistles, so full were they of counsels, prayers, and benedictions.

The work bearing the somewhat ambitious title of "The History of New England" is only one of those

diaries which were common in the seventeenth century. Winthrop's theme was of lasting importance, and his treatment of it was, of course, intelligent. His spirit was, on the whole, just and tolerant, special praise belonging to his accounts of his difficulties with rivals in office and influence. The record begins "Anno Domini, 1630, March 29, Monday," the day after Easter: "Riding at the Cowes, near the Isle of Wight, in the Arbella, a ship of three hundred and fifty tons, whereof Capt. Peter Milborne was master, being manned with fifty-two seamen, and twenty-eight pieces of ordnance, (the wind coming to the N. by W. the evening before,) in the morning there came aboard us Mr. Cradock, the late governour, and the masters of his two ships, Capt. John Lowe, master of the Ambrose, and Mr. Nicholas Hurlston, master of the Jewel, and Mr. Thomas Beecher, master of the Talbot, (which three ships rode then by us,—the Charles, the Mayflower, the William and Francis, the Hopewell, the Whale, the Success, and the Trial being still at Hampton and not ready,) when, upon conference, it was agreed, that (in regard it was uncertain when the rest of the fleet would be ready) these four ships should consort together; the Arbella to be admiral, the Talbot vice-admiral, the Ambrose rear-admiral, and the Jewel a captain; and accordingly articles of consortship were drawn between the said captains and masters; whereupon Mr. Cradock took leave of us, and our captain gave him a farewell with four or five shot." Thus minutely—though usually in more graceful English than this—Winthrop carries his chronicle to

November 11, 1648, a little more than four months before his death. The work, as has already been said, is a diary, not properly a history; and it includes whatever would naturally be entered in the diary of a public man in a little state: meteorological accounts during the ocean voyage; the appearance of Massachusetts on landing; descriptions of notable deeds and days, religious and political; losses and gains of the colonists; accidents and peculiar experiences; trials, executions, and minor punishments; ecclesiastical and doctrinal discussions, etc. The governor's half-superstitious belief in "special providences" appears quite frequently, and the diary closes with the story of the drowning of a child in a well in a cellar, on a Sunday evening, while the parents were visiting a neighbor. On the previous evening, too, the father had "wrought an hour within night," so that the Sabbath was broken on any theory. "The father, freely in the open congregation, did acknowledge it the righteous hand of God for his profaning his holy day against the checks of his own conscience." Just before this is an account of the drowning of two children while their parents were at the lecture [sermon]. "The parents had no more sons, and confessed they had been too indulgent toward him, and had set their hearts over much upon him."

But Governor Winthrop's mind was not a petty one. Its largeness was never better shown than in his *magnum opus*, the speech made by him in 1645, after he had been vindicated from the charge that he had gone beyond his rights as deputy-governor

(Dudley being governor). This "little speech," as Winthrop modestly called it, was evidently prepared and revised with care. It was delivered in the meeting-house, after the "lecture," in presence of magistrates, deputies, and people. Its terseness and distinctly Puritan ability, as well as its place in time, entitle it to complete presentation here:

I suppose something may be expected from me, upon this charge that is befallen me, which moves me to speak now to you; yet I intend not to intermeddle in the proceedings of the court or with any of the persons concerned therein. Only I bless God, that I see an issue of this troublesome business. I also acknowledge the justice of the court, and, for mine own part, I am well satisfied, I was publicly charged, and I am publicly and legally acquitted, which is all I did expect or desire. And though this be sufficient for my justification before men, yet not so before the God, who hath seen so much amiss in my dispensations (and even in this affair) as calls me to be humble. For to be publicly and criminally charged in this court, is matter of humiliation, (and I desire to make a right use of it,) notwithstanding I be thus acquitted. If her father had spit in her face, (saith the Lord concerning Miriam,) should she not have been ashamed seven days? Shame had lien upon her, whatever the occasion had been. I am unwilling to stay you from your urgent affairs, yet give me leave (upon this special occasion) to speak a little more to this assembly. It may be of some good use, to inform and rectify the judgments of some of the people, and may prevent such distempers as have arisen among us. The great questions that have troubled the country, are about the authority of the magistrates and the liberty of the people. It is yourselves who have called us to this office, and being called by you, we have our authority from God, in way of an ordinance,

such as hath the image of God eminently stamped upon it, the contempt and violation whereof hath been vindicated with examples of divine vengeance. I entreat you to consider, that when you chose magistrates, you take them from among yourselves, men subject to like passions as you are. Therefore, when you see infirmities in us, you should reflect upon your own, and that would make you bear the more with us, and not be severe censurers of the failings of your magistrates, when you have continual experience of the like infirmities in yourselves and others. We account him a good servant, who breaks not his covenant. The covenant between you and us is the oath you have taken of us, which is to this purpose, that we shall govern you and judge your causes by the rules of God's law and our own, according to our best skill. When you agree with a workman to build you a ship or house, etc., he undertakes as well for his skill as for his faithfulness, for it is his profession, and you pay him for both. But when you call one to be a magistrate, he doth not profess nor undertake to have sufficient skill for that office, nor can you furnish him with gifts, etc., therefore, you must run the hazard of his skill and ability. But if he fail in faithfulness, which by his oath he is bound unto, that he must answer for. If it fall out that the case be clear to common apprehension, and the rule clear also, if he transgress here, the error is not in the skill, but in the evil of the will: it must be required of him. But if the case be doubtful, or the rule doubtful, to men of such understanding and parts as your magistrates are, if your magistrates should err here, yourselves must bear it.

For the other point concerning liberty, I observe a great mistake in the country about that. There is a twofold liberty, natural (I mean as our nature is now corrupt), and civil or federal. The first is common to man with beasts, and other creatures. By this, man as he stands in relation to man simply, hath liberty to do what he lists; it is a liberty to evil as well as to good. This liberty is in-

compatible and inconsistent with authority, and cannot endure the least restraint of the most just authority. The exercise and maintaining of this liberty makes men grow more evil, and in time to be worse than brute beasts: *omnes sumus licentia deteriores.* This is that great enemy of truth and peace, that wild beast, which all the ordinances of God are bent against, to restrain and subdue it. The other kind of liberty I call civil or federal; it may also be termed moral, in reference to the covenant between God and man in the moral law, and the politic covenants and constitutions amongst men themselves. This liberty is the proper end and object of authority, and cannot subsist without it; and it is a liberty to do that only which is good, just, and honest. This liberty you are to stand for, with the hazard (not only of your goods, but) of your lives, if need be. Whatsoever crosseth this, is not authority, but a distemper thereof. This liberty is maintained and exercised in a way of subjection to authority; it is of the same kind of liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. The woman's own choice makes such a man her husband; yet being so chosen, he is her lord, and she is to be subject to him, yet in a way of liberty, not of bondage; and a true wife accounts her subjection her honor and freedom, and would not think her condition safe and free, but in her subjection to her husband's authority. Such is the liberty of the church under the authority of Christ, her king and husband; his yoke is so easy and sweet to her as a bride's ornaments; and if through frowardness or wantonness, etc., she shake it off, at any time, she is at no rest in her spirit, until she take it up again; and whether her lord smiles upon her, and embraceth her in his arms, or whether he frowns, or rebukes, or smites her, she apprehends the sweetness of his love in all, and is refreshed, supported, and instructed by every such dispensation of his authority over her. On the other side, ye know who they are that complain of this yoke and say, Let us break

their bands, etc., we will not have this man rule over us. Even so, brethren, it will be between you and your magistrates. If you stand for your natural corrupt liberties, and will do what is good in your own eyes, you will not endure the least weight of authority, but will murmur, and oppose, and be always striving to shake off that yoke; but if you will be satisfied to enjoy such civil and lawful liberties, such as Christ allows you, then will you quietly and cheerfully submit unto that authority which is set over you, in all the administrations of it, for your good. Wherein, if we fail at any time, we hope we shall be willing (by God's assistance) to hearken to good advice from any of you, or in any other way of God; so shall your liberties be preserved, in upholding the honor and power of authority amongst you.*

The character of Winthrop somewhat resembled that of Washington: both were discreetly aristocratic, ruled wisely and conservatively, and benefited the state more than sensational or radical minds could have done. Both were unjustly accused of showing an unduly monarchical spirit, but both triumphed, and were afterward held in affectionate veneration. Winthrop—mild, firm, politic, brave—was well entitled to his election, September 7, 1643, to that almost prophetic office, President of the United Colonies of New England.

The present discussion of the most significant books by early descriptive and historical writers would be incomplete without a few words concerning two peculiar productions, delineating primitive New

* "History of New England from 1630 to 1649." By John Winthrop, Esq., first governour of the colony of the Massachusetts Bay. Edited by James Savage (vol. ii., pp. 279–283). Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1853.

England society from a critical, as well as a descriptive, point of view.

The first of these, "The New England Canaan,"* was written by that jovial individual, Thomas Morton, whose excesses and extravagances at Merry Mount, near Boston, so scandalized his stern Puritan neighbors that they resorted to military attack, arrest, trial, and banishment, to be rid of him. In this book the author had a very practical purpose; to glorify the soil and capabilities of New England, and the peaceableness of the Indians; to ridicule and denounce the doctrines and practices of the Puritans; and thereby to vex and hinder them by enlisting against them the active hostility of Archbishop Laud and other powers in England. Morton, like the Gorges colonists in Maine, was an Anglican, and wished to see the Church of England in control of the new land, which belonged to it, he thought, by divine and governmental right, and by priority of settlement. The book, printed at Amsterdam or London in 1637, had some small influence at home, but did not circulate in New England, where it could not be found even as an argument against Morton when the Puritans tried him in 1644.

Thomas Morton, — 1646.

Morton gave some glowing descriptions of the physical conditions of Massachusetts, but chiefly devoted himself to the delineation of what he deemed religious heresies and social absurdities. He liked the land, but hated its occupants, and envied them

* Reprinted under the editorship of Charles Francis Adams, Jr., for the Prince Society, Boston, 1883.

their charter, which he wished to have revoked. In views of religious practice, governmental obligation, and social polity, Morton and the Puritans had nothing in common, and the last part of his book is a rough and violent presentation of this fact. In his serious statements he is very careless, and in his lampoons wild and irregular. For a true account of Morton and his followers one must go to Hawthorne's story, "The Maypole of Merry Mount," or to John Lothrop Motley's meritorious though forgotten novel, "Merry Mount." When all has been said that can be said in his favor, it must be admitted that he and his band were not men of the sort desirable when a state is to be established. He praised Indians, and lived with them happily, but his influence upon them was not salutary; his fanciful description of the country had, and would have, no effect upon its colonization by men of his own way of thinking; and his strictures on Puritan "tenents and practice" failed of their purpose. One is sorry for his apologies for what he calls "harmless mirth," but can hardly wonder that the happy-go-lucky colonist and his book perished in obscurity and failure. The "goodly groves of trees, dainty, fine, round, rising hillocks; delicate, fair, large plains; sweet crystal fountains, and clear running streams, that twine in fine meanders through the meads . . . fowls in abundance, fish in multitude, . . . millions of turtle-doves on the green boughs, which sat picking of the full, ripe, pleasant grapes," made the land seem to him "paradise;" but this paradise (of which even the hard-working Puritans were

ignorant) was not for the fanciful historian of "The New England Canaan."

A counterpart to Morton's "New England Canaan" is to be found in "The Simple Cobbler of Agawam in America," by Nathaniel Ward. Mor-

Nathaniel Ward, 1570–1653.

ton was a staunch adherent of Laud and Anglicanism, though his defence of them could hardly be called discreet, nor his illustration of Church of England principles attractive. Ward, at first an eccentric Essex parson of the Church of England, knew Laud well, having been frequently summoned before that august prelate, and finally excommunicated by him. After this he naturally turned still more eagerly toward the Puritans, and was a resident of Massachusetts from 1634 to 1646. At the time of his arrival he was more than sixty years old, a Cambridge graduate, well-travelled, and familiar with both London life and rural life in England. In Massachusetts he was prominent as settler of towns, law-maker, and preacher. His first American parish was at Agawam (now Ipswich), mentioned in the title of his best-known book. On his return to England he took part in the politics of the Commonwealth, and died a minister in his old Essex, over eighty years of age.

The "Simple Cobbler," "by Theodore de la Guard," was printed in London just after Ward's return to England, but had been written during the last year or two of his American life. Its purpose, as expressed by the nominal writer on the title-page, was "to help mend his native country, lamentably tattered, both in the upper leather and sole, with all

the honest stitches he can take ; and as willing never to be paid for his work by old English wonted pay. It is his trade to patch all the year long gratis. Therefore, I pray, gentlemen, keep your purses." This early New England Sartor Resartus spoke freely that which he thought, and satirized sharply those thoughts, words, and deeds, in Old and New England, which he deemed harmful. He was not always polished, temperate, consistent, fair, or even funny ; but he contrived to say some things effectively and nearly all things plainly, notwithstanding a cumbrous, punning, and pedantic style. He was a pseudo Hans Sachs in prose, talking from his cobbler's bench, and trying to mend manners and morals. This literary device, however, proved rather burdensome, and was not constantly kept in mind.

Ward felt that he was writing in earthquaking times, and he outspoke as a warning guide and prophet. A theoretical believer in religious and political freedom, he was as much afraid of anarchy and free-thought as he was of priestcraft and oppression. He wanted to whip others, while saving his own back. The moral which the Anglican drew from the book must have been : See what your Puritanism amounts to ! Ward's moral was : Crush dissent from our dissent ; make our social laws still more rigid. He goes so far, indeed, that we half believe the whole thing a *reductio ad absurdum*, written in the interests of episcopacy and monarchy. " I am not tolerant," he seems to shout to his English accusers ; " I am as anxious to get rid of those who disagree with me, as you are to get rid of me."

"Polypiety is the greatest impiety in the world"—this last sentence is from the book itself. "He that is willing to tolerate any religion or discrepant way of religion, besides his own, unless it be in matters merely indifferent, either doubts of his own, or is not sincere in it. He that is willing to tolerate any unsound opinion, that his own may also be tolerated, though never so sound, will for a need hang God's Bible at the Devil's girdle," and so on, in various furious metaphors. Ward evidently delighted to expand and expound Article XVIII. of the Church of England. We need not lumber our pages with quotations from the "Cobbler," whose wrath gains strength by going; as Professor Nichol neatly says:* "We are half inclined to suspect Mr. Ward of playing Mephistopheles, like Defoe in his 'Short Way with the Dissenters.'" But it was more than a joke, this Puritan insistance on the right to say to Royalist and Puritan, to Anglican and Separatist: "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther." Ward carried his censorship even to matters of men's and women's dress, and here he is more amusing and perhaps a little less angry. Had he restrained his religious polemics and enlarged his social satire, his book would be better worth reading to-day.

Nathaniel Morton, 1612–1685.

We now reach the name of the first American book-maker—the prototype of hundreds of industrious men, most of whose names and deeds we shall not have the honor of considering in the volumes of this work. Nathaniel Morton, however, deserves a word as our pioneer in a harmless

* "American Literature; an Historical Sketch." Edinburgh, 1882, p. 42.

and even useful line of labor. Morton, though of English family, was born at Leyden, the seat of the church transported to Plymouth in 1620, and came to America at the age of ten. Governor Bradford's wife was Morton's aunt, and the youth early made himself useful to the governor. He was elected secretary of Plymouth Colony every year from 1647 to 1685, when he died; and of course he became thoroughly informed concerning major and minor local history. The bulk of the Plymouth records for half a century are in his handwriting.

In Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1669, there was "printed by S. G. and M. J., for John Vsher of Boston," the first published history of New England, compiled by Morton at the suggestion of the commissioners of the United Colonies. Its title-page was prepared in the stately and voluminous fashion of those days: "New England's Memorial; or, A brief relation of the most memorable and remarkable passages of the providence of God, manifested to the planters of New-England in America; with special reference to the first colony thereof, called New-Plimouth. As also a nomination of divers of the most eminent instruments deceased, both of church and commonwealth, improved in the first beginning and after progress of sundry of the respective jurisdictions in those parts; in reference unto sundry exemplary passages of their lives, and the time of their death. Published for the use and benefit of present and future generations, by Nathaniel Morton, secretary to the court, for the jurisdiction of New-Plimouth." Then follow three texts from the

Old Testament. The book proved to have the use and benefit claimed, for editions were printed in England and America as late as 1855, the very year of the recovery of the Bradford manuscript.

Morton's chief sources were Bradford's history and Winslow's diary. To these he made acknowledgment, but he did not sufficiently distinguish between his copyings and his interpolations. We have seen what was the ability of Bradford and Winslow; Morton's was much smaller; he may be described, in Dr. Johnson's phrase, as "a harmless drudge," whose own words have little strength or character. But, at least, he made a book; he saved important materials from destruction, and furnished New England with a local history, tolerably trustworthy, save in such examples of bigotry as that shown in his mention of Roger Williams. The loss of Bradford's manuscript—used by Hutchinson and Prince—made Morton's book still more valuable for many years. He also deserves some credit for collecting, in his "Memorial," specimens of New England's little stock of original verse—which was "poor but pious." The modern reader is glad that Morton felt that "the weight of duty" lay upon him "to commemorize to future generations the memorable passages of God's providence to us and our predecessors in the beginning of this plantation"; and he still responds willingly to Morton's gentle deprecation: "And now courteous reader, that I may not hold thee too long in the porch, I only crave of thee to read this following discourse with a single eye, and with the same ends as I had in penning it. Let not

the smallness of our beginnings, nor weakness of instruments, make the thing seem little, or the work despicable; but, on the contrary, let the greater praise be rendered unto God, who hath effected great things by small means.*

The diaries or annals of Bradford, Winslow, and Winthrop are indispensable sources of authority in early New England history; and, of course, they throw some light upon the social life of the colonists. But that life, in a later part of the eighteenth century, had become fuller and more complex; it is fortunate, therefore, that a longer, more detailed, and more entertaining record of it is presented in the elaborate diary of Samuel Sewall, who has not inaptly been called (by Mr. Henry Cabot Lodge) "the Puritan Pepys." Boston and London, just before 1700, were very different places: the former had nothing corresponding to the Restoration, the plague, the fire, the social richness of the great English metropolis; but it may truly be said that Chief-Justice Sewall did for Boston what Mr. Secretary Pepys did for London,—to compare small things with great. The general method of the two diarizers was the same.

Samuel Sewall, 1662–1730.

In Samuel Sewall we have an American product. He was born in England, to be sure, but his grandfather and father were Massachusetts colonists, the latter one of the founders of Newbury, Massachusetts, whither the boy Samuel was brought in 1661, at the age of nine. Ten years later he graduated at

* "To the Christian Reader," p. 7 of the edition of "New England's Memorial," issued by the Congregational Board of Publication. Boston, 1855.

Harvard, of which he was resident fellow and librarian ; and as the chief function of the college was the education of ministers, Sewall meant to begin life as a preacher. Marrying an heiress, he gave up his profession, though never his piety ; turned his attention to the law ; sat in the royal council of the province : and for the last part of his life was a judge of the superior court for twenty-nine years, and chief-justice for ten years of this time. He was an opponent of slavery, a friend of Indian Christian education, a social, political, and judicial leader. He applied Puritan principles to the development of the founded state ; and his solidity of character, his range of learning and sympathies, and his discretion (unsettled only in the witchcraft delusion), made him a centre of influence for half a century.

Sewall's little three-page tract, "The Selling of Joseph," printed in Boston in 1700, was one of the first arguments against African slavery on American soil ; possibly it was the very first. At that time, it will be remembered, a few slaves were owned in New England, and Judge Sewall was writing of an evil near at hand. He treated it justly and vigorously, and some of his sentences were precursors of the ringing words of the later and more directly successful abolitionists. In what he said of liberty in general he apparently did not perceive any inconsistency with his arbitrary and bigoted treatment of Friends, Church of England men, and other theological opponents ; but his conclusions were true, and farther reaching than he knew. Like most of the New England leaders,

Sewall also wrote two books on America,—in the second of which he considered it scripturally, as the future earthly paradise; but this last portentously titled collection of "Phenomena Quædam Apocalyptica," with its unfoldings of prophecy, need not now detain us.* No more valuable is his "Talitha Cumi; or An Invitation to Women to look after their Inheritance in the Heavenly Mansions," in which he learnedly argued that women *would* be found in heaven,—a theme fit for affirmative discussion in Sir Thomas Browne's "Vulgar Errors." Sewall was an inveterate penman; but all his other writings are side-shows in comparison with his bulky life-record, the "Diary from 1673 to 1729."

Judge Sewall, unlike most writers of diaries, did not weary of his task, nor did he make full entries at one period and meagre records at another. From its commencement to its close the diary goes unflaggingly and evenly on, and its general method is unchanged. Every thing noteworthy is jotted down, and we have a full picture of the man and of his times for half a century. We learn the characteristics of himself and his family; we see his relatives, friends, and associates; we know whither he went and what he did, in public and private life; we study the manners of the time; we share in its religious and political aspirations, movements, and controversies; we take part with Sewall in the management of the affairs of Harvard College (already, in his

* "Two editions were published, the first in 1697, of what he considered his *magnum opus*. . . . This is one of the many books that are handled only when the shelves which hold them are dusted."—Editorial note [by G. E. Ellis, D.D.], Sewall's Diary, I. 69.

opinion, becoming a little heterodox); and we go with him to England for a year's space. And not only this: we look into the man's heart; note his religious "elevations" and depressions; and even share in his four courtships and two marriages at an age nearer seventy than sixty. To follow this record as a mere matter of personal gossip and old-time chatter, would be unprofitable to us and sometimes unkind to the dead old worthy; but to study it for the light it throws upon American thought and civilization two centuries ago, is at once a solid benefit and a genuine entertainment.* In these many pages of Sewall we find traces of austerity, narrowness, bigotry, pettiness, and (in the witchcraft matter) fatal delusion; but we are still more impressed with the writer's sincerity, constant endeavor to do right, and faithful adherence to those principles of duty which are the foundation of society. The little details of his life are no more trivial than would be those of most men, if written down as fully; the records of an old man's courtships, melancholy-amusing as they are,—and it should be said that they ought not to have been printed,—reveal nothing morally discreditable; and even in the witchcraft error, let us not forget that Sewall shared

* "Judge Sewall is better known to us in both his outer and inner being, in all his elements, composition, and manifestation of character, in his whole personal, domestic, social, official, and religious life, than is any other individual in our local history of two hundred and fifty years. And this is true not only of himself, but through his pen, curiously active, faithful, candid, kind, impartial, and even just, his own times stand revealed and described to us, as if by thousands of daguerreotypes and repeating telephones." —George E. Ellis, D.D., address on Samuel Sewall, in the Old South Church, Boston, Sunday, Oct. 26, 1884.

his mistake with hundreds of the most learned and devout men of his time, in both hemispheres; that his part in the executions was no greater than that of others of high standing in England and America; and that, more fully than any of them, he publicly and privately recanted.

The first entry is dated Dec. 3, 1673, when Sewall was a resident at Harvard College, where he had taken his bachelor's degree two years before: "I read to the Senior Sophisters, the 14th Chapter of Heerboord's Physick, *i. e.*, part of it, which begins thus, Sensus Communes, etc. I went to the end, and then red it over from the beginning, which I ended the 24th of March, 167$\frac{3}{4}$." At this beginning of his diarizing, Sewall was just twenty-one years old. He continued to write until "Feria Secunda, Octob^{r} 13, 1729," when he was an old man of seventy-seven (to die within three months); recording that "Judge Davenport comes to me between ten and eleven a-clock in the morning and speaks to me on behalf of Mr. Addington Davenport, his eldest Son, that he might have Liberty to wait upon Jane Hirst [Sewall's granddaughter], now at my House, in way of Courtship. He told me he would deal by him as his eldest Son, and more than so. Inten'd to build a House where his uncle Addington dwelt for him; and that he should have his Pue in the Old Meetinghouse. I gave him my Hand at his going away, and acknowledged his Respect to me and granted his desire. He said Madam Addington would wait upon me. His honour the Lieut. Governor visited me quickly after, and ac-

quainted me that he design'd for Newbury in a day or two, to stay a week or fortnight. I informed his Honor of what Mr. Davenport had been about; his Honor approved it much, Comended the young Man, and reckon'd it a very good Match."

Fifty-six years separate the young Harvard instructor from the courtly old man, making "a very good match" for his granddaughter. In the chronicle of these years all things are noted; it is hard to sample so great a store. One day (March 18, 1701) he will tell us that "Last night I heard several Claps of Thunder: Great Fogg to day"; and the next day be a historical entry: "We hear by the way of Virginia that War is proclaimed between England and France." Then Lord Bellomont dies and is honored, and a lesser event occurs: "the Artillery Company give three Volleys in the middle of the Town when they came out of the field, with regard to my Lord. Col. Townsend wears a Wigg to day." Sewall himself never would wear a wig; the Lord had given and taken away his hair, and he would not borrow any, though the lack partly caused him the loss of goodly Katherine Winthrop when he went a-courting in his old age. Politics and wigs, piety and dinners come side by side: "Text, wisdom is the principal thing. Grace is Glory in the Bud; Glory is Grace full-blown. Din'd with Mr. Belchar." "Mr. Cotton Mather prays for the College and other schools. Mr. Ezk. Lewis marries the widow Kilcup." *Post hoc* and *propter hoc* combine: "Septr 12th Mrs. Tuthill falls through a Trap Door into the cellar, breaks her right Thigh just above

the knee, so that the bones pierce through the skin. —Septr 19. Mrs. Tuthill dies." Funeral records abound from first to last: the Judge never let slip any opportunity of "assisting" at these melancholy scenes. Marriages and dinner parties were less numerous, but duly appreciated. At sick-beds the good man was often present, praying that physic might precede "restauration"; and he was an inveterate bestower of small charities, the price of which, whether pious books or sweet-meats, was almost always duly noted. Of the orthodoxy, new buildings, and belongings at Harvard he took due care, and specially liked Commencement-day. Once when his son was taken sick on the latter occasion he ill concealed his vexation. He sat in courts, civil and ecclesiastical; he summarized sermons, and occasionally admonished the clergy on doctrinal points. He liked the good old times, and deplored the degeneracy of the later Puritans, but he had his own modest pleasures and chastened enjoyments of this world's good things,—funerals included. But in almost all things he was dignified, sensible, and genuinely pious. He began his works with a prayer; he ended them with a *Laus Deo.**

In 1736, in Boston, appeared a tidy little volume which was in every way creditable to the incipient literature of the colony. It was neatly "printed by Kneeland & Green for S. Gerrish," in 18mo, with sober black borders around the

Thomas Prince, 1687–1758.

* Sewall's "Diary" fills vols. V.–VII. of the Fifth Series of the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society. The learned editor was George E. Ellis, D.D.; his associates on the committee of publication, Mr. Whitmore, Prof. H. W. Torrey, and Prof. James Russell Lowell.

page, various typographical devices for convenient reference, and a rubricated title-page, setting forth the ambitious scope of the work. It was not a manuscript record, like Bradford's or Winslow's, nor a glorification of a new Canaan, nor a mere collection of other men's words; but it was planned to be "A Chronological History of New-England in the Form of Annals: being a summary and exact Account of the most material *Transactions* and *Occurrences* relating to This Country, in the Order of Time wherein they happened, from the *Discovery* by Capt. Gosnold in 1602, to the *Arrival* of Governor Belcher, in 1730." This comparatively modest scheme was preluded by "an Introduction, containing a brief *Epitome* of the most remarkable *Transactions* and *Events* Abroad, from the Creation: Including the connected Line of Time, the Succession of Patriarchs and Sovereigns of the most famous Kingdoms & Empires, the gradual *Discoveries* of America, and the *Progress* of the Reformation to the Discovery of New England." The learned and ambitious author was Thomas Prince, M.A., minister of the Old South Church in Boston. The time had come, he thought, for a compendious history of New England, with a general historical introduction. His mottoes, from Deuteronomy and Job, were: "Remember the Days of Old, consider the Years of Many Generations"; "For enquire, I pray thee, of the former Age, and prepare thy self for the Search of their Fathers." The good clergyman was trying to do for New England what the monastic authors of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle accomplished for Old England six or seven hundred years before.

Prince was a Massachusetts man by birth and education; Sandwich was his native town; he duly graduated at Harvard; entered the former profession of Harvard—the ministry; and when thirty-one years old became minister of the Old South (Third Congregational) Church in Boston. Those were the days of long pastorates, and Prince held his position for forty years. Foreign travel and a studious habit aided his influence, which was as wide as that of the chief ministers of his day in the New England metropolis. His historical reading was specially thorough, and though his learning was less than that of the English prodigies of the previous century, it was undoubtedly more solid than that of the pretentious Cotton Mather. Prince dabbled in science without unsettling his faith, and he read and wrote history in a patient and philosophic spirit. He did American historical work of the second stage; he took diaries, letters, and documents and drew from them an orderly, continuous, and trustworthy narrative. His library was the best in his time, and the use he made of it keeps his name in honorable memory. His book suffers from its form—that of annals,—but an uninterrupted historical narrative was perhaps too much to expect in those days. The annal style was fashionable; and, at least, it had the advantage of conciseness and accuracy, the qualities specially needed. Prince was determined to test every statement submitted to his judgment; and to print only what was likely to be of permanent value. Clearly American literature, poor as it was, had got beyond the John-Smith stage.

This faithful historian also possessed another needed trait, that of perceiving that real history cannot be written save by the comparative method. To understand aright the record of English doings in the New World, some consideration of the history of Old England, and of the world in general, was needed. Therefore, we have his weighty introduction of eighty-four pages, from Adam to King James I. In this introduction a very compact arrangement by tables is presented, and the necessary explanations are given in foot-notes. The connection between Christian and secular history, and between Continental and English, is carefully shown ; and important social acts, such as the invention of printing, the completion of the Wycliffe Bible, etc., are duly noted. It is certain that New England possessed no other historical compend so full, so convenient, or so trustworthy as this general introduction by Prince.

Like that later historian, Henry Thomas Buckle, the laborious Prince began on a scale which he could not follow to the end. Only the first volume of the work was ever published, though three thirty-two-page pamphlets subsequently appeared. September 7, 1630, is the last regular entry of a date, in the bound issue, though October 14, 1632, is mentioned. The continuation brought the record to August 5, 1633, and it there stops, a fragment, but a useful and meritorious fragment. The author was a slow worker and a busy man ; there was waiting for such work as his a real but not an enthusiastic nor a lasting welcome ; and he apparently allowed his zeal to flag toward the close of his life. In what he did he

displayed the internal qualities needed in an historian: painstaking care for accuracy, and a philosophic temper; and though his book is somewhat forbidding in form and lacking in beauty of style, it marked an improvement upon the slipshod work of Morton. Prince was the direct forerunner of the eminent list of Boston historians; his name is fitly commemorated by one of the historical societies of that city; and it is an interesting fact that the closing pages of his history are devoted to an account of the naming of the Puritan capital:

Order'd . . . that *Trimountain* be called BOSTON. . . . Thus this remarkable PENINSULA, about two Miles in Length and one in Breadth, in those times appearing at High Water in the form of *two Islands* who's *Indian* Name was *Shawmut;* but I suppose on the account of three contiguous *Hills* appearing in a range to those at *Charlestown*, by the *English* called at first *Trimountain*, and now receives the Name of BOSTON. Which Deputy Governor *Dudley* says, they had before intended to call the Place they first resolv'd on: and Mr. *Hubbard*, that they gave this Name on the account of Mr. COTTON, [the then famous Puritan Minister of *Boston* in *England;*] for whom they had the highest Reverence, and of whose coming over they were doubtless in some hopeful Prospect. And from the late Judge *Sewall* in comparison with the *Charlestown Records*, I learn, that *this Town* was settled under the Conduct of Mr. JOHNSON; whom Mr. *Hubbard* calls, *a worthy Gentleman of Note* for *Piety and Wisdom;* and the Rev. Mr. *Danforth*, of *Roxbury*, styles him—*a right Nathaniel, eminent for Piety and Virtue;* and in another *Place*, a *Gentleman of singular Piety and Sincerity.*

To *this Town*, the *major Part* of the *Church* in a little time Removes from *Charlestown;* and so much increases,

as that *One Hundred fifty* & one are admitted by Oct. 14 1632, when they peaceably Divide into *two Churches.*

"Thus out of small Beginnings * Great Things have been produced by HIS HAND that made all things, and gives Being to all things that are: and as one small Candle may light a Thousand; so the Light *Here* kindled hath shone to many, yea in some sort to our whole Nation: Let the Glorious Name of JEHOVAH have all the Praise."

A service analogous to Prince's for Massachusetts, was performed for Virginia by William Stith, third president of Virginia's college of William and Mary, which was the centre of the intellectual life of the colony. Stith, like Prince, was a native of the region whose history was undertaken; and, like him, he availed himself of the materials left by preceding writers. The parallel is continued when we say that Stith was a minister, that he lived at the colonial capital, and that both his studies and his personal acquaintance with celebrities were wide. Prince's book appeared in Boston in 1736; Stith's in Virginia in 1747; and both were but parts of projected works, Prince's coming down to 1630, Stith's to 1624. Neither book was a model of literary style, but Prince's could boast the more orderly arrangement. Stith, however, usually brought his sentences to a close, which Prince sometimes forgot to do.

William Stith, 1689–1755.

Stith had not reached the modern critical position as an historian; indeed, he did not sift alleged facts with sufficient industry. John Smith was at that time in full credit as a veracious chronicler, and

* This quotation is from Bradford.

Stith's "History of the First Discovery and Settlement of Virginia" duly and respectfully follows his statements. But the manuscript and printed authorities in Williamsburg were by no means confined to Smith's works; and the learned author of this new book relied largely upon other sources. The History is decidedly the most important work of its class produced in the Southern colonies before the Revolution. Virginia had a record worth writing, and the time had come to reduce it to a permanent form. The original sight-seers had passed away; now followed the sober chroniclers of days already become historic. Virginia from 1607 to 1624 was in its first —but by no means its last—period of romantic story; and Stith did his best to describe faithfully the doings of men already half passed into a legendary stage. His success was not commanding, but it was respectable.*

* His book (published in 1747) appeared five years before the author became president of William and Mary. A verbatim reprint appeared in New York in 1866.

"The reverend William Stith, a native of Virginia, and president of its college, has also written the history of the same [early] period, in a large octavo volume of small print. He was a man of classical learning, and very exact, but of no taste in style. He is inelegant, therefore, and his details often too minute to be tolerable, even to a native of the country whose history he writes."—Thomas Jefferson, "Notes on the State of Virginia," ed. 1801, 346–7.

CHAPTER IV.

THE THEOLOGIANS OF THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES.

WEIGHTY works with long titles—these we find by the dozen in the collections of American books and pamphlets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By them the bibliographer can minutely trace the progress of printing in the New World, and the theologian can define the character and follow the course of religious opinion and practice in a land where religion was the all-important thing. But have they any literary value? What has literature to do with such treatises as these?:

"The Covenant of Grace Opened: Wherein These Particulars are Handled; viz.: (1) What the Covenant of Grace is; (2) What the Seales of the Covenant are; (3) Who are the Parties and Subjects fit to receive these Seales. From all which Particulars Infants Babtisme is proved and vindicated."

"The Application of Redemption by the Effectual Work of the Word and Spirit of Christ, for the Bringing Home of Lost Sinners to God."

"A Survey of the summe of Church-Discipline: Wherein, The Way of the Churches of New-England is warranted out of the Word, and all Exceptions of weight, which are made against it, answered."

The author of these books, and others like them, was Thomas Hooker, founder of Hartford, a church and town leader, a denominational authority, and a great and untiring preacher, in the opinion of his hearers. Two hours and a quarter he preached, on one occasion, and the thunders of his spoken words were caught and held in many booklets and pamphlets once read in New England and even in London, but undisturbed now, save by the antiquary or the auctioneer. A good, magisterial, narrow, useful man—how often must this record be made of one or another of the early Puritans! But his printed sermons, with all their intense theology, are not able to reproduce for us the achievements of the speaker: in nothing save doctrinal force do they surpass the utterances of a thousand pulpits to-day; their kinship in literature lies only in the fact that they were written, and that they had an ideal theme. This must be the final verdict with reference to thousands of printed pages produced by godly and justly honored American ministers before the Revolution. Their quaint characteristics and their doctrinal systems do not make them literature, for the most part. But in them the American mind was steadily working. The force of that mind was first felt in theology, second, in politics, last, in literature proper.

Thomas Hooker, 1586–1647.

It is not easy, in these days of the independence of the laity, to estimate rightly the power of the ministers in early New England. Few Roman Catholic priests exercise a more potent control over their congregations than did these ministers and

servants of the First Churches of Boston, Salem, Plymouth, over their independent and democratic flocks. Theoretically, the minister was but one among the congregation, or rather the body of church-members; practically, however, he was a force in public affairs and in social order. He advised and warned on spiritual themes, and he spoke as one having authority in political questions. "That deservedly famous man of God, Mr. John Cotton," as John Norton called him, was the minister of the First Church of Boston, and therefore held an official position which made him a sort of metropolitan, or presiding bishop, of the strictly Puritan diocese. That which form could not do, among these scorners of form, was brought about by sheer intellectual ability and the force of circumstances. Weaklings and dunces have occupied high positions in hierarchical organizations; strong men have become leaders in democracies, religious as well as political. Cotton had been a famous preacher in Cambridge, England; he lost none of his resonance and robustness of manner and scholarship when he turned Puritan and came to New England. He had been an Anglican priest in Boston, England; Laud hounded him out of the country; he fled to the new Boston, which was named in his honor; and there he found full scope for his powers.

John Cotton, 1585–1652.

But of Cotton as a writer there is not much to say. Of his catechism called "Spiritual Milk for American Babes" (forming a part of that godly classic, the "New England Primer"), we have already spoken; these nine little pages are now his only remembered

writings. But thirty or forty works of his, large and small, have come down to us. He waged a bitter theological war with Roger Williams, as vehement (and fortunately quite as polite) as those which Milton was at that time fighting with his foes on the other side of the water. He could turn from "The Pouring out of the Seven Vials" to "A Brief Exposition of the Whole Book of Canticles"; great as he was deemed he was willing to pen "A Modest and Cleare Answer to Mr. Ball's Discourse of set Formes of Prayer"; he felt able to describe "The Doctrine of the Church to which are committed the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven"; but he strove to walk humbly in "The Way of Life; or, God's Way and Course, in bringing the Soule into, keeping it in, and carrying it on in, the wayes of life and peace." Others called him the patriarch of New England; but he himself was only trying to show that "The Way of the Churches of Christ in New England" was "The Way of Churches walking in Brotherly equalitie, without Subjection of one Church to another." Good, earnest, strong man that he was, perhaps he does not now regret that the greater learning of the Boston which owes him so much, makes upon literature a far deeper mark than his own.

Roger Williams, 1606–1683.

Roger Williams, Cotton's great opponent, had originally been a Church-of-England minister, but had, like Cotton, become a Nonconformist. After his arrival in New England, he was for a time minister of the Salem First Church, but later became identified with the Baptists, and

with the fortunes of Providence. His relations with the Puritans were in every way unpleasant. Williams was a believer in civil and ecclesiastical freedom, and he greatly annoyed his pædo-baptist opponents by insisting that their principles of "freedom to worship God" be carried one step farther, or at least that they become tolerant of the opinions of others. Modern New England—indeed, modern civilization—has accepted many of the principles for which Williams so bravely and logically fought. In his Providence colony he sundered church and State, and civil court and religious opinion and practice—all so closely united in Massachusetts; and there he admitted the Friends, though he repudiated and tried to overthrow some of their arguments and beliefs. The whole relation of Williams to the Puritans shows how inconvenient it is for reformers to have within their number one willing to go a step farther, and to bring their own inconsistencies to light. Williams was an able, earnest, and successful pioneer in that great movement toward religious freedom which has characterized the history of the United States. But in justice to the Puritans it should be said that he was sometimes hasty, indiscreet, sensational; and that he lacked the self-control which should be shown by a great reformer, as well as the solid learning of the Puritan leaders.

Williams wrote voluminously, bravely, vigorously, often violently, in favor of freedom of conscience, the severance of Church and State in England and America, and, above all, the abolition of persecution because of religious opinion. For "not loose, but

Christian libertie," no American ever wrote more boldly or truthfully. To this theme were devoted his two chief works : " The Bloody Tenent of Persecution for cause of Conscience (a dialogue between Truth and Peace)," and " The Bloody Tenent yet more Bloody, by Mr. Cotton's attempt to wash it white in the Blood of the Lamb." This was a reply to Cotton's " Bloody Tenent washed and made white in the Blood of the Lamb." In this controversy Williams had the upper hand. Less worthy are his " Hireling Ministry none of Christ's," and his hateful and personal attack on the system of the Friends : " George Fox digg'd out of his Burrowes." To this Fox replied under the slightly gentler title of " A New England Fire-Brand Quenched." It is pleasant to get beyond these billingsgate theological controversies, of Old and New England, in the middle of the seventeenth century ; and it is fortunate that they are now read only by the historian and the antiquary. In those days it had been better for many not to put theological pen to sermon-paper, but to say patiently with Job : " Oh . . . that I had the indictment which my adversary hath written."

Translations of foreign works, made in a vernacular tongue, do not hold an important place in the literature of that tongue. When George Sandys completed his translation of Ovid, during his temporary stay on the banks of the James River, he was only indirectly benefiting future American literature. At about this time, however, was completed, in England, the great King James version

John Eliot, 1604–1690.

of the Bible, which was destined to affect all English and American literature so profoundly. There is but one King James Bible, and but one Luther's Bible; what literary place or influence can be assigned to that version of the Bible, in the Indian (Algonkin) language, which good John Eliot, of Roxbury, the "apostle to the Indians," made in the middle of the seventeenth century? This, at least, that it was the first translation of the Bible made by an American resident, the first Bible printed in British America, and the pioneer in that long line of philological and literary labors done by godly and learned American missionaries in all parts of the world. And this, too, that it was the mighty and patiently wrought sign of Christian love toward those whom the white men were slowly crowding toward the West, and whose dusky skins, some said, were the earthly covering of no immortal souls. Eliot thought that the Indians were the descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel; to their conversion he chiefly devoted his learning and his life; and for them he pleaded even in the midst of Indian wars. No opposition on the part of his friends could deter him from his work; and his little churches of Indians did their Christian labors as best they could, Indian converts from Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay aiding their teacher. Eliot also wrote an English harmony of the Gospels, an Algonkin grammar, several brief accounts of work among the Indians, and a tract in favor of church councils, in which he was an earnest advocate of such a semi-Presbyterian system as might bring the Presbyterians and

Congregationalists together. Another (and an unpopular) pamphlet was "The Christian Commonwealth, or, The Civil Policy of the Rising Kingdom of Jesus Christ," (London, 1660). But we chiefly remember him, with Roger Williams and Daniel Gookin, as the Indian's friend and Christian teacher; and in his honor transcribe the title of his one great work:

"Mamusse Wunneetupanatamwe Up-Biblum God naneeswe Nukkone Testament kah wonk Wusku Testament. Ne quoshkinnumuk nashpe Wuttinneumoh Christ noh asooweesit John Eliot." [Cambridge, N. E., 1661–1663.]*

The great clerico-literary family of early New England was that of the Mathers. Its position in Massachusetts theology was as commanding as that of the Adams family in Massachusetts politics a century later. The first in the direct and noted line was Richard (1596–1669), a native of England, an Oxford man, a Church-of-England minister, a Nonconformist, a Massachusetts Puritan clergyman, and a ready writer; this order of events, as we have seen, was repeated in the lives of many ministers of the period. Richard's son was Increase (1639–1723); the son of Increase was Cotton (1663–1728); and the son of Cotton was Samuel (1706–1785), a Harvard graduate, a Boston minister, a pamphleteer, sermon-printer, and pseudo-poet, and the author of a life of his father. Of this line of devout orthodox divines, the second and third were the greater, and the third the greatest of all.

*The New Testament appeared first in 1661, and the whole Bible in 1663. Eliot did all the work himself.

It would be irreverent to call Increase Mather a Jack-of-all-trades; it is historical to say that he was ambitious to shine in many lights. He graduated at Harvard in 1656, and was an early example of the fashion of taking an additional degree abroad, for he duly proceeded as Master of Arts from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1658. Twenty-nine years after leaving Harvard he became its president, holding office sixteen years. Meanwhile, he was a preacher in Boston, and performed for the colony a dubious, partly beneficial, diplomatic service in 1692, when he procured for Massachusetts a new and semi-democratic charter, which actually made Mather himself the namer of the governor, deputy-governor, and council. Mather afterward appointed these officers, with his son as his chief adviser in the business. Father and son were aristocrats, or strict Federalists in early colonial politics, and high-church Congregationalists in religious practice, trying to increase clerical power at the expense of lay. Increase Mather gave the churches stability, and his charter, though no improvement upon the old, and restricting popular choice, was perhaps the best to be obtained at the time.

Increase Mather, 1639–1723.

Mather was a learned man, and a solid and (we are told) effective sermonizer, whose printed discourses have a wide range, abound in quotations, after the fashion of the time, served their purpose, and really were not worth typographical perpetuation. Most printed sermons are like letter-files or bound volumes of daily newspapers, never referred to, save for a date, and for controversial purposes,

and those of this great Boston figure are not exceptions. Increase Mather apparently had a deeper knowledge than that of Cotton, with less facility, less fondness for display, and less bungling inaccuracy.

His chief work was a compilation, a sort of devout American story-book of the supernatural, "printed by Samuel Green, for Joseph Browning," in "Boston in New England," 1684, entitled: "An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences. Wherein an Account is given of many Remarkable and very Memorable Events, which have happened this last Age, especially in New England. By *Increase Mather*, Teacher of a Church at *Boston in New England*." *

Twelve chapters compose the work, in which the author considers remarkable sea deliverances, remarkable preservations ("a child that had part of her brains struck out, and yet lived and did well," etc.); "remarkables about thunder and lightning," miscellaneous "things preternatural which have happened in New England," "dæmons and possessed persons," ghosts and apparitions, deaf and dumb people, petrifactions, vegetable parasites of animals, New England storms, and many other matters. The book is a strange medley of piety and superstition, elementary science and crass ignorance. Mather profoundly believed in special providences, which he reverently followed, but his Deity sometimes seems to be shrewdly lying in wait for his vic-

* Reprinted, under the editorship of George Offor, in John Russell Smith's "Library of Old Authors," London, 1856.

tims, instead of saying in that most mighty of sentences: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." The devil, also, is a worker in nature. "It is not heresie," says Mather, "to believe that Satan has sometimes a great operation in causing thunder-storms. . . . 'Satan, let loose by God, can do wonders in the air; he can raise storms, he can discharge the great ordnance of Heaven, thunder and lightning, and, by his art, can make them more terrible and dreadful than they are in their own nature.'" Again: "If the fallen angels are able (when God shall grant them a commission) to cause fearful and fatal thunders, it is much more true concerning the good and holy angels"; which statement, like many others in the book, is supported by copious Bible references. In witchcraft Mather believed (the book was published nine years before the Salem delusion), and he argues in favor of the truth of the thing, with much show of ancient learning, modern investigation, and scriptural authority. "The argument by many insisted on from the Scriptures is irrefragable; therein witchcrafts are forbidden. . . . Experience has too often made it manifest that there are such in the world as hold a correspondence with hell. . . . There have been many in the world who have, upon conviction, confessed themselves guilty of familiarity with the devil." On the other hand, "good angels do sometimes visibly appear," while mere apparitions are not so frequent in places where the Gospel prevaileth as in the dark corners of the earth." But, alas! Satan sometimes appears in the guise of good men, and "caco-dæmons" pre-

tend to be good angels. "As for the spirits of men deceased, "it is certain they cannot re-assume their bodies, nor yet come to men in this world when they will, or without a permission from Him in whose hand they are . . . That the ghosts of dead persons have sometimes appeared, that so the sin of murder (as well as that of theft) might be discovered, is a thing notoriously known." "The procuring cause" of "the appearance of persons deceased" "is usually some sin committed."

This quaint book appeared two years before the first folio of Sir Thomas Browne, and two years after the death of that knightly physician; but as Browne's books had appeared separately, Mather was much influenced by him. By a coincidence, the last chapter is devoted to "an account of some remarkables at Norwich, in *New*-England"; the great Dr. Browne, it will be remembered, long dwelt at the English Norwich. Mather's style is inferior to that of the author of the "Religio Medici," but better than that of most early New England writers. He was a good editor, and his great accumulation of anecdotes, from many sources, is conveniently and attractively arranged. Browne's charity is almost lacking in Mather, who deems the Quakers "under the strong delusions of Satan," "some of them undoubtedly possessed with evil and infernal spirits, and acted in a more than ordinary manner by the inmates of hell"; but he is willing to say that they are "indeed to be pitied, in that they themselves know not that an evil spirit doth possess and act them."

I believe that the preparation, the comparative excellence, and the popularity of this weird book are to be explained by the half-suppressed poetical sense of Puritanism, which *would* find utterance in these lurid or ghostly pages. Mather, nearly two centuries before Poe, alludes to the "Mr. Glanvil" of Poe's Ligeia; and some of Mather's stories are decidedly in Poe's own style. The Puritans had no Fall of the House of Usher to read, so they listened to the Reverend Doctor Mather as he told them "That houses are sometimes troubled by evil spirits." They knew not and cared not for the popish Divine Comedy, but the poetry in them would "climb to a soul" in Wigglesworth's Day of Doom.

Cotton Mather, 1663–1728.

It has been said that Aristotle knew all that was to be known in his day. Of Cotton Mather it might be declared that he sampled all knowledge accessible in New England. His learning was multifarious, his personal acquaintance wide, his zeal unflagging, his intentions of the best. An essayist has written of "the prodigiousness of Doctor Johnson"; the enormousness of Cotton Mather might not be an inapt title. On both sides he was descended from the clerical aristocracy of New England (his mother was a daughter of John Cotton), and he raised himself to a position more prominent than that of any of his predecessors in the genealogical line. Admiration and wonder he aroused without difficulty; affection and confidence hardly went out toward him. His position, unduly magnified in his own day, is belittled now by a usual fate. But that he had some qualities of greatness is undeniable.

He was the very man to gather and arrange that literary mass whose appropriate title was "Magnalia Christi Americana"—the chief among nearly four hundred productions, great and small, of his inveterate pen.

Cotton Mather showed precocious ability, as he had a right to do, in view of his inherited blood. But though he rivalled John Stuart Mill in early acquaintance with many books and subjects, his educational discipline was less methodical than Mill's, and even more likely to make the son a juvenile attitudinarian and sayer of smart things. He graduated at Harvard at fifteen—it must be remembered that the requirements for graduation were about equivalent to those for admission now; but nevertheless the boy was acquainted with a fair share of "classical learning," and could talk Latin, in the fashion of the time. Of course he became a minister—he was born a preacher; and when little more than of age he was associate pastor of the North Church, Boston, the head of which was his father, Increase Mather. Those were the days of long pastorates; the minister and the people had the good old-fashioned idea that their union was a lasting one; and father and son died in office, the former in 1723, the latter only five years later. In all the days of the Matherian apostolic succession at the North Church (now extinct) it was a great ecclesiastical, political, and social centre. We have already seen that this influence was always conservative, sometimes reactionary; that the witchcraft persecutions were abetted by both the Mathers; and that the personal, magisterial,

domineering element was altogether too prominent. They lived like a bishop and his coadjutor; indeed, there was in Cotton Mather a semi-monastic, ascetic, ritualistic element; Puritan though he was, he made much of times and circumstances; he fasted, analyzed, and re-analyzed his spiritual state in minutest detail, and made trivial acts semi-sacramental reminders of divine prototypes. Of course he was a formalist in the arrangement of his time, and a most industrious worker. He read and wrote in six or seven languages, and was especially familiar with Hebrew and Latin; he had note-books in plenty, and better still, a full and ready memory. In talk he was a sort of lesser Johnson or Coleridge; in literature a Puritan Burton, without his wit. All his writings are full of quotations, learned allusions, elaborate personifications, Latin, Greek, or Hebrew titles. Was Mather an intentional and pretentious pedant? By no means; he was a widely-read man, following the fashion of English learning in the seventeenth century, and sincerely desirous to instruct and benefit the growing society in which he lived. To us he seems bombastic, inaccurate, unlovely; but he did not so seem to his subjects,—nor to himself; and his work was in many ways helpful and stimulating. If he agreed with his father in favoring the death-penalty for alleged witchcraft, let it not be forgotten that he worked faithfully for the oppressed and suffering, for prisoners, sailors, Indians. And in his "Magnalia" he really made, for a time, *the* New England book of religious, political, educational, and biographical information.

The book marks the beginning of eighteenth century literature in America; it appeared in 1702, and was published in London, like many New England treatises of the time. Its very title showed its weight and its far-reaching ambition, and also illustrated the close union between Church and secular history in the colonial period: "Magnalia Christi Americana: or the Ecclesiastical History of New England, from Its First Planting in the year 1620, unto the year of our Lord, 1698, In Seven Books." It had eight hundred folio pages, and its seven books discussed the foundings of the colonies, the lives of famous ministers and civilians, the history of Harvard College, the church councils, etc.; gave a "faithful record of many illustrious, wonderful providences"; and finally chronicled "the Wars of the Lord, being an history of the manifold afflictions and disturbances of the churches in New England, from their various adversaries, and the wonderful methods and mercies of God in their deliverance; in six chapters; to which is subjoined an appendix of remarkable occurrences which New England had in the wars with the Indian salvages, from the year 1688 to 1698." Mather completed his work as planned; and on the whole rounded it well, externally but not internally. The "Magnalia" is religious as well as secular, and is to be classed with the theological division of colonial literature, and not with the historical. It is a miscellaneous and vast storehouse of information; but prejudice colors fact, doctrine overtops record, and we lack in Mather that tidiness and accuracy which so shine in the pages of Brad-

ford, Winthrop, and Sewall. A learned historical authority (James Savage) has exposed many of Mather's mistakes; and, unfortunately, has shown that some of them are worse than careless. Perhaps, however, we should be thankful that Mather gave us so much, and should not criticise him too minutely. He is later than Bradford and Winthrop; fuller as well as later than Prince (though Prince lived after him); and he prepares the way for Hutchinson. He greatly helps us in attaining our present full knowledge of Puritan New England before 1700.

Let it be plainly understood, however, that whatever the credit due to Mather as minister, preacher, compiler, scholar, and force, little belongs to him as man of letters. His "Late Memorable Providences relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions" (1689), and "Wonders of the Invisible World" (1693) are slovenly and illogical. A plain "merchant of Boston in New England," Robert Calef, in his "More Wonders of the Invisible World" (London, 1700) easily overthrew his illustrious opponent.* The "Magnalia," despite its inclusiveness and augustness, its awe-inspiring quotations and allusions, is an untidy piece of literature,—inexcusably so when we consider its author's ability, training, and opportunities. It need not detain us much longer; let us only stop to read one of its most elaborate passages, on which the author evidently expended his best powers,—the introduction to the "History of Harvard Colledge":

* See the reprint of the two works (by Calef and Mather) in "Salem Witchcraft," edited by Samuel P. Fowler; Boston: 1865.

"*If there have been* Universities *in the world, which a* Beza *would call* Flabella Satanæ, *and a* Luther *would call* Cathedras Pestilentiæ, and antichristi luminaria, *and a third ventures to style* Synagogas perditionis and puteos abyssi; *the excellent* Arrowsmith *has truly observed, that it is no more to be inferred from hence that all are so, than that all books are to be burnt, because the Christians did burn the* magical *ones at* Ephesus. *The* New-Englanders *have* not *been* Weigelians: *or the disciples of the furious fanatick, who* held forth [*Reader, let it never be translated into* English!] Nullam esse in universo Terrarum Orbe Academiam, in qua Christus inveniatur; in Academijs ne tantillam quidem Christi cognitionem reperiri posse: Noluisse Christum Evangelium prædicari per Diabolos; ergo non per Academicos. *Lest all the* Hellebore *of* New England (*a countrey abounding with* Hellebore) *should not suffice to restore such dreamers unto their wits, it hath produced an* University *also, for their better information, their utter confutation. Behold, an American* University, *presenting herself, with her sons before her* Europaean *mothers for their blessing. An* University *which hath been to these plantations, as* Livy *saith of* Greece, *for the good literature there cultivated,* SAL GENTIUM; *an* University, *which may make her boast unto the circumjacent regions, like that of the orator on the behalf of the English* Cambridge, Fecimus (absit verbo invidia, cui abest Falsitas) ne in *Demagorijs* lapis sederet super lapidem, ne deesent id templis theologi, in Foris Jurisperiti, in oppidis medici; rempublicam, ecclesiam, sedatum, exercitum, viris doctis replevimus, eoq; melius bono publico inservire comparatis, quo magis eruditi fuerint: *Finally, an* University *which has been what* Stangius *made his abbey, when he turned it into a protestant* colledge; *Τῆς Θεογνωδίας παιδευτῆριον καὶ Ψυχῶν διδασκαλεῖον Λογικῶν. And a river, without the streams whereof, these regions would have been meer unwatered places, for the* devil!" *

* "Magnalia," second edition, Hartford, 1820; ii., 5.

The bookmakers had surely appeared in New England, and they had come to stay. Book manufacturing in a literal and external sense had also become a Massachusetts industry; for in 1726, at Boston, in New England, B. Green and S. Kneeland printed for B. Eliot and D. Henchman a folio of more than nine hundred pages, the typographical impression being fair, and the title-page resplendent in black and red. This stately volume was nothing less, in very truth, than "A Compleat Body of Divinity, in Two Hundred and Fifty Expository Lectures on the Assembly's Shorter Catechism: wherein the Doctrines of the Christian Religion are unfolded—their Truth confirmed, their Excellence displayed, their Usefulness improved, contrary Errors and Vices refuted and exposed, Objections answered, Controversies settled, Cases of Conscience resolved; and a great Light thereby reflected on the present Age." The author was Samuel Willard, who had died in 1707, having been pastor of the Old South Church in Boston, and also having been Increase Mather's successor as head of Harvard College. Willard differed from Mather in that he resisted the anti-witchcraft persecution, and otherwise he did not submit to the Matherian sway in his position as head of a rival though friendly Boston church. Theologically, however, Willard and the Mathers were in substantial agreement, and Willard's lectures elaborately expound the prevalent creed of his time. They represent a part of the thought and work of the last two decades of the author's life; they are stately, methodical, dull; they abound in

Samuel Willard, 1640–1707.

"improvements" of truth; no one person, probably, ever heard them through, and few have read them. They cannot—and need not—be mastered entire even by the literary historian,—just as Delia Bacon's book on Shakespeare could not be read by Hawthorne, its literary sponsor. But the huge tome has merits. As is said by Joseph Sewall and Thomas Prince, in their preface, Willard had an evenly balanced mind, a logical plan, a clear style, and some religious imagination. The expansion of the book is really due, as its editors said in apology, to its scope, and not to its style, considered sentence by sentence. Willard's English is simpler, less pedantic, and therefore more praiseworthy than that of either of the Mathers, though it has not survived so long, for Willard's subject was concerned neither with New England history nor with the grotesquely supernatural. He made a plain and straightforward application of his theology to practical life, and undoubtedly benefited his fellows and his immediate successors.

Meanwhile education and its corollary, literature, had appeared in Virginia. After many delays and trials, the College of William and Mary, in Virginia, was established in 1693 at Williamsburg, being the second collegiate institution within the present limits of the United States. Williamsburg, the capital city of the colony, was the centre of its political, social, and intellectual life; at one end of its Duke of Gloucester Street stood the college; at the other, the government building; near by was the governor's palace. The inhabitants fondly deemed their little city a min-

iature London; its muddy streets witnessed much gayety and display, and its ball-rooms were at first the most brilliant centres in the fashionable life of the South. The college, rich until the Revolution, but now decedent or dead, gave a respectable education to the youth of the colony; the bishops of London were its chancellors, and its visitors numbered many of the influential men of Virginia. Beneath its chapel rested the bones of local magnates, and from its walls went forth men prominent in affairs. William and Mary gave Washington his surveyor's commission, and was the *alma mater* of three other presidents of the United States.

Near by was the first printing press in Virginia; and some of the officers of the college, mainly Episcopalians, were writers of books and pamphlets. Of the "History of Virginia" by Stith, third president of William and Mary, we have already spoken. Still more prominent in the development of Virginian education and literature was James Blair, first president of the college, who worked for the intellectual prosperity of college and colony for more than half a century. This institution of learning was almost his in-

James Blair, 1656–1743.

dividual creation, and his untiring zeal soon made it a force, though in the midst of some cavalier apathy toward education, and of a political rather than a literary tendency. He procured the charter of the college; he wrote, as well as spoke, in its favor; and, like so many of the early leaders, he enthusiastically and eloquently described in print the natural advantages of Virginia as a field for settlement and development. Blair had the hon-

esty, however, to denounce its educational, social, and religious deficiencies at the end of its first century.

Samuel Willard wrote and published two hundred and fifty discourses on the Westminster Catechism; James Blair chose a better subject for his sermons (no less than one hundred and seventeen) on the sermon of all history: Christ's on the Mount. The general helpful and didactic purpose of the works was the same; but Blair was the more liberal of the two writers. On the opening of the college chapel, June 28, 1732, Blair preached a sermon from Prov. 22:6—"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." President Blair of William and Mary and Vice-President Willard of Harvard were trainers of the young in the double capacity of preachers and teachers; they did a good work in their "day and generation," and it is no disparagement to that work that Willard's huge folio and Blair's five volumes now sleep on the dusty shelves of a very few libraries.

Of all the Americans who wrote before the Revolution, on other than political and scientific subjects, the reputation of Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards stood highest in the colonies. The clergy led the intellectual life, and Mather and Edwards deeply impressed the clergy with their achievements. The renown of both spread to England, to some extent, though English literature—and even English philosophy—in the eighteenth century was too self-absorbed to pay much attention to American Congregational ministers and their weighty books.

Of the two, Edwards was in every way the greater

—in depth of learning, in the value of what he had to say, and in the external style in which he clothed his words. Philosophy, in colonial America, was the "handmaid of religion," and Edwards was above all a religious philosopher. His training at Yale had been bent toward philosophical studies, and his sober mind eagerly followed, even in youth, the most intricate problems of "fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute." His independent studies supplemented the college curriculum, and soon he could teach his masters in their somewhat narrow field. Becoming a minister, of course, Edwards bravely fought the cold antinomianism of his Northampton church, which compelled him to leave and to go to Stockbridge as a pioneer worker among the Indians. In his "Humble Inquiry into the Rules of the Word of God Concerning the Qualifications Requisite to a compleat standing and full communion in the Visible Christian Church," he demanded that real conversion and a correct life should precede admission to the Supper of the Lord. He engaged, like most of the leading ministers of his day, in active theological controversies, by sermon and pamphlet, and the courage of his convictions was ever shown, at whatever personal loss. The doctrines of original sin and of eternal punishment he vigorously proclaimed in spoken, written, and printed words. He was the New England representative and mouthpiece of the spirit of Calvin, and in a lesser way he showed the influence of Locke. To reconcile Calvinistic theology with the laws of sound thought was the life-work which he set before himself. Four years

Jonathan Edwards, 1703–1758.

before his death (as President of Princeton College, New Jersey, in 1758) he completed in his lonely Stockbridge home that influential work on which his fame now wholly rests: "A Careful and Strict Inquiry into the modern notion of that Freedom of Will which is supposed to be essential to Moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Praise and Blame."

Edwards on the Will.

The purpose of this great and long-powerful treatise, upon which Edwards lavished all his intellectual abilities, was to show that sound philosophical and theological conclusions were identical, as regards the action of the mind and will of man. Edwards' theology was Calvinistic; and the scheme of God's moral government, as described by the great Geneva divine, was, in Edwards' view, in close agreement with true theoretical philosophy, and with the observations of the scientific student. The keynote of the Edwardsian philosophy was this: "The will is not self-determined"; and he elaborately argued that all its acts must be certain, and arranged from without, or else that there could be no really ruling God in the universe. Naturally, he was obliged to defend himself against the charge of being a necessitarian, and in subsequent writings he expounded the idea of the sinfulness of sin, and declared his belief that a wicked disposition in man was his personal fault, not his misfortune. This controversy has been continued, with diminishing force, until the present day; Edwards' defenders have been many, while, of course, Arminian theologians have repudiated his results and criticised his methods of reaching them.

It has long been the custom among many to declare that Edwards' conclusions are terrible, but his logic irresistible. I believe that this opinion, like so many others in literary and philosophical criticism, is based chiefly upon hearsay and tradition, not personal study. Some competent theologians and students of mental science, after faithful investigation, have, it is true, justified his logical method, but it has been declared unsound by others equally competent. Method and result are certainly not in accord with the consensus of Protestant statements at the present day, nor with the creeds or convictions of the continuous Christianity of past history. Edwards frequently maintains that liberty is necessarily fettered, and that there can be no *real* freedom other than that of unintelligent indifference; and that because the mind, after an act of choice, prefers A to B, it was not in a real state of freedom as regards A and B, classed together, before its choice.* He vir-

* "Either human liberty is such that it may well stand with volitions, being necessarily connected with the views of the understanding, and so is consistent with Necessity—or it is inconsistent with and contrary to such a connection and necessity. The former is directly subversive of the *Arminian* notion of liberty, consisting in freedom from all Necessity. And if the latter be chosen and it be said that liberty is inconsistent with any such necessary connexion of volition with foregoing views of the understanding, it consisting in freedom from any such Necessity of the Will as that would imply; then the Liberty of the soul consists (in part, at least) in freedom from restraint, limitation, and government, in its actings, by the understanding, and in Liberty and Ableness to act contrary to the understanding's views and dictates. And consequently the more the soul has of this disengagedness, in its acting, the more Liberty. Now let it be considered what this brings the noble principle of human Liberty to, particularly when it is possessed and enjoyed in its perfection, viz. a full and perfect freedom and Ableness to act altogether at random, without the least connexion with, or restraint or government by, any dictate of reason, or any thing whatsoever apprehended, considered or viewed by the understanding: as

tually declares that because a man lives in a certain town, and must go north, south, east, or west to leave it, he is therefore so conditioned in his liberty of choice that his mind has no real freedom in willing which way he will go.* Again, his pet and final

being inconsistent with the full and perfect sovereignty of the Will over its own determinations. The notion mankind have conceived of liberty, is some dignity or privilege, something worth claiming. But what dignity or privilege is there, in being given up to such a wild contingence, as this, to be perfectly and constantly liable to act unintelligently and unreasonably, and as much without the guidance of understanding, as if we had none, or were as destitute of perception, as the smoke that is driven by the wind!" —"Freedom of the Will," Part II., § 13 (p. 155 of vol. v. of Edwards' works. Worcester, 1808).

* "I would lay down this as an axiom of undoubted truth, that every free act is done *in* a state of freedom, and not *after* such a state. If an act of the Will be an act wherein the soul is free, it must be exerted in a *state of freedom*, and in the *time of freedom*. It will not suffice that the act immediately follows a state of Liberty; but Liberty must yet continue, and coexist with the act; the soul remaining in possession of Liberty. Because that is the notion of a free act of the soul, even an act wherein the soul uses or exercises Liberty. But if the soul is not, in the very time of the act, in the possession of Liberty, it cannot at that time be in the use of it.

"Now the question is, whether ever the soul of man puts forth an act of Will, while it yet remains in a state of Liberty, in that notion of a state of Liberty, viz., as implying a state of Indifference, or whether the soul ever exerts an act of choice or preference, while at that very time the Will is in a perfect equilibrium, not inclining one way more than another. The very putting of the question is sufficient to shew the absurdity of the affirmative answer; for how ridiculous would it be for anybody to insist that the soul chooses one thing before another, when at the very same instant it is perfectly indifferent with respect to each! This is the same thing as to say, the soul prefers one thing to another at the very same time that it has no preference. Choice and preference can no more be in a state of Indifference than motion can be in a state of rest, or than the preponderation of the scale of a balance can be in a state of equilibrium. Motion may be the next movement after rest, but cannot coexist with it in any, even the least part of it. So choice may be immediately after a state of Indifference, but has no coexistence with it; even the very beginning of it is not in a state of Indifference. And therefore if this be Liberty, no act of the Will, in any degree, is ever performed in a state of Liberty, or in the time of Liberty. Volition and Liberty are so far from agreeing together and being essential to one another, that they are contrary one to another, and one ex-

argument, stripped of verbiage, is this: Before any free act of will, there must ultimately be a choice of a particular freedom, which choice is in itself a strict limitation of that freedom.* To this argument Edwards turns again and again; it is his citadel. But its practical value is *nil*. Upon the thoughts, words, and deeds of life it exerts no effect. Before one chooses A or B, it is true, he must make up his mind which to choose; having chosen, perhaps he cannot choose the other; at any rate, he cannot *have* chosen other than he did choose. What follows as to his real freedom of choice in the first place? Practically nothing. Can a man, before choosing, select A *or* B at will? Yes, unless he is a puppet: and no

choice and destroys the other, as much as motion and rest, light and darkness, or life and death."—"Freedom of the Will," Part II., § 7 (pp. 82, 83 of vol. v. of Edwards' works. Worcester, 1808).

* "Therefore, if the Will determines all its own free acts, the soul determines all the free acts of the Will in the exercise of a Power of willing or choosing (or which is the same thing, it determines them of choice; it determines its own acts by choosing its own acts). If the Will determines the Will, then choice orders and determines the choice, and acts of choice are subject to the direction and follow the conduct of other acts of choice. And, therefore, if the Will determines all its own free acts, then every free act of choice is determined by a preceding act of choice, choosing that act. And if that preceding act of the Will or choice be also a free act, then, by these principles, in this act too, the Will is self-determined; that is, this, in like manner, is an act that the soul voluntarily chooses, or, which is the same thing, it is an act determined still by a preceding act of the Will, choosing that. And the like may again be observed of the last-mentioned act, which brings us directly to a contradiction. For it supposes an act of the Will preceding the first act in the whole train, directing and determining the rest: or a free act of the Will before the first free act of the Will. Or else we must come at last to an act of the Will, determining the consequent acts wherein the Will is not self-determined, and so is not a free act, in this matter of freedom. But if the first act in the train, determining and fixing the rest, be not free, none of them all can be free, as is manifest at first view. But what is demonstrative, presently."—"Freedom of the Will," Part II., § 3 (pp. 84, 85 of vol. v. of Edwards' works. Worcester, 1808).

subtlety or multiplication of words can make this other than fact. If the mind does not know this, it in effect knows nothing. It was by a free act that Edwards determined to write his treatise. Writing it in Stockbridge, he could not also write it elsewhere; having determined to write it, he pushed forward to the end; God knew from eternity that he would write it; and yet he might freely have written, instead, on the Westminster Catechism, like Willard, or the Sermon on the Mount, like Blair. And in spite of all its evident and potent environment, the completed volume was the work neither of chemical forces merely, nor of the Fates, nor of the pen of God.

It is not necessary to criticise further, in a history of literature, the premises, methods, or conclusions of Edwards' philosophy. Neither do I propose to dwell upon, or to present a sample of, his famous sermon on the punishment of the wicked. Edwards sincerely believed in the prevalent New England theology of his day; he argued with all his might for the doctrines of original sin, total depravity, election, and eternal punishment; so, with lesser powers, did most of the Congregational ministers of the eighteenth century. As for the famous book against the freedom of the will, Edwards bravely tried to solve an unsolvable problem. We *know* that we have freedom of the will, and we *know* that God must be more than a mere bystander in his universe,—that he foresees and controls.

"I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs";

but it is equally true that

> "No fate, save by the victim's fault, is low,
> For God hath writ all dooms magnificent,
> So guilt not traverses his tender will." *

But after all criticisms have been made upon Edwards as philosopher and theologian, it remains that he strongly expressed an idea of the might and majesty of God, and of his august government of the universe. Again, some of his conclusions anticipated, and are in close agreement with, the dicta of modern science. Evolution, heredity, natural laws, as expounded by Darwin, Spencer, or Galton, teach not less truly than did Edwards the potency, almost the inflexibility, of inheritance and environment. Dr. Holmes, the most strenuous anti-Calvinist in recent American literature, in his "Mechanism in Thought and Morals," sometimes seems to join hands with the eighteenth century philosopher, sprung, like himself, from sturdy Connecticut ministerial stock.

The Edwardsian theology and philosophy strongly influenced New England thought during the eighteenth century, though in a modified, and ultimately in a softened, form. The system of Edwards was taken up by three theologians, in particlar: Samuel Hopkins (who studied under Edwards), Nathaniel Emmons, and Timothy Dwight (Edward's grandson).

Samuel Hopkins [illegible] Hopkins put forth a complete treatise on theology in a two-volume work-printed at Boston in [illegible] The System of Doctrines contained in Divine Revelation explained and defended. Hopkinsianism (a slightly mitigated Edwardsianism) became a common expression in New England, just as,

* [illegible]

later. ministers' mouths frequently expounded the difference between "Taylorism" (progressive orthodoxy) and "Tylerism" (stationary orthodoxy), which convulsed New Haven and Hartford a few years later. Dr. Hopkins was an earnest philanthropist, and fought for the abolition of slavery (still feebly existing in Rhode Island, where he aided in its overthrow). He also labored for schemes of colonization of freed blacks in Africa. Altogether, he was a power in New England religious thought, in its second stage; and not without reason, in some of the old portraits of ministers, are "divines" represented with the right hand laid on two volumes labelled "Hopkins." Dr. Emmons, who was pastor of one church in Franklin, Massachusetts, for sixty-seven years, was less influential than Hopkins, and left no formulated system; but he was in constant demand as a doctrinal preacher at ordinations, etc., when he expounded the faith substantially on Hopkinsian lines. Timothy Dwight, as able as Hopkins, and more brilliant than either Hopkins or Emmons, was the third in this triumvirate of later Calvinists. Just a quarter of a century after the appearance of Hopkins' systematic theology, President Dwight published at Middletown, Connecticut, in five volumes, "Theology Explained and Defended, in a Series of [one hundred and seventy-three] Sermons." The Unitarian controversy had begun, and Dwight earnestly championed the orthodox side; but while an Edwardsian in certain elements, he modified and popularized the system of his leader. This was the last

Nathaniel Emmons, 1745–1840.

Timothy Dwight, 1752–1817.

elaborate theological treatise written in the Puritan style—a long series of sermons discussing point after point. Dwight was cultured as well as theological, and introduced into the clerical character an urbanity which it had not invariably showed, in New England. He was a reviewer, an essayist, and the author of "Travels in New England and New York." The "literature of travel" barely belongs to literature at all; but Dwight's descriptions do not lack interest or beauty; and they distinctly promoted the reception given to Cowper and Wordsworth in America. Of Dwight as poet something will be said in another volume of this work.

Let us turn from philosophy to philanthropy, and from a speculative theology to practical Christian work. It must be set to the lasting credit of the Puritans before 1800 that so many of them worked for the Indians, like Edwards, or the oppressed, like Mather and Hopkins. The zeal of the Master burned in their breasts, as it did in the hearts of some of the Canadian Jesuits in the seventeenth century. Thus David Brainerd, a puny student at Yale, a consumptive despondent like Cowper, terribly troubled by a perpetual habit of spiritual self-inspection, expelled from college for indiscreet revivalistic zeal, occupied his short lifetime in earnest work among the aboriginal inhabitants of Connecticut and the Middle States. Weak and dying, he spent his last months in the house of Jonathan Edwards at Northampton, where his life ended in 1747, at the age of twenty-nine. Edwards' daughter Jerusha, eighteen years old, was his faith-

David Brainerd, 1718–1747.

ful nurse, nor did she long survive him. Was it a sadly tender Puritan idyl that led her, in her father's words, "to be helpful to him in his weak and low state"? If so the idyl included the idea of self-sacrifice and loving service toward a man of God; for the young people were alike in their sincere devotion to duty. On her death-bed the young girl said, her father tells us, that she had "not seen one minute for several years, wherein she desired to live one minute longer, for the sake of any other good in life, but doing good, living to God, and doing what might be for his glory." Brainerd was like-minded; Edwards says, in his Account of the Life of the Reverend Mr. David Brainerd: "Among very many other extraordinary expressions, which he then [on his death-bed] utter'd, were such as these: '*My Heaven* is to *please* God, and *glorify* him, and to give all to him, and to be wholly devoted to his Glory; that is the Heaven I long for; that is my *Religion*, and that is my *Happiness;* and always was ever since I suppose I had any true Religion; and all those that are of *that* Religion shall meet *me* in Heaven. . . . It is impossible for any rational Creature to be *happy* without acting all *for God:* God himself *could* not make him happy any other Way. . . . There is nothing in the World worth living for but *doing Good*, and *finishing God's work*, doing the work that Christ did." This was the spirit that led Brainerd through his little life of devotion and self-sacrifice; this finally emancipated him from wicked self-analysis in the garb of piety; and this preserved and made profitable to many an

American reader his celebrated "Diary," often reprinted. The book has no high literary merit, but it is the record of a faithful heart, and therefore it long kept near to the heart of American humanity. There is but one Holy Catholic Church, and its true members may be Puritan or Romanist, Waldensian or Quaker.

Another Christian diarist, as devout and earnest as Brainerd, but more serene and self-poised, and the master of a purer literary style, was the Quaker, John Woolman. It was of him that Charles Lamb said: "Get the writings of John Woolman by heart." It would not be easy, nor, of course, would it be worth while, to memorize a journal filling two hundred and thirty printed pages, Lamb—a too-enthusiastic critic of his favorite authors—was merely saying that Woolman's Journal is pure, true, and high, and therefore, in its way, beautiful. Crabb Robinson calls it "a perfect gem"; he declares its style "of the most exquisite purity and grace;" and, best of all, Woolman's "religion was love. His whole existence and all his passions were love. If one could venture to impute to his creed, and not to his personal character, the delightful frame of mind he exhibited, one could not hesitate to be a convert." Channing, who had some personal and literary qualities like Woolman's, called the Journal beyond comparison the purest and sweetest autobiography in the language. Clearly, a Friend had won a place in American literature. The other of the two prominent American authors belonging to the Friends—John Green-

John Woolman, 1720–1772.

leaf Whittier—says that in editing Woolman's pages (Boston edition of 1871) he was awed and solemnized by the presence of a serene and beautiful spirit.

These are strong words—too strong, I fear—about this New Jersey clerk, school-teacher, tailor, itinerant Friend, preacher, early anti-slavery advocate, all of whose writings have faded from memory save this Journal. But if we open the record at random we see a good man, living for God in the world, and ranging in his tender sympathies from little things to great. Hear him in the last year of his life, sailing to England to die:

"Second of sixth month.—Some fowls yet remained of those the passengers took for their sea-store. I believe about fourteen perished in the storms at sea by the waves breaking over the quarter-deck, and a considerable number with sickness at different times. I observed the cocks crew as we came down the Delaware, and while we were near the land, but afterwards I think I did not hear one of them crow till we came near the English coast, when they again crowed a few times. In observing their dull appearance at sea, and the pining sickness of some of them, I often remembered the Fountain of goodness, who gave being to all creatures, and whose love extends to caring for the sparrows. I believe where the love of God is verily perfected, and the true spirit of government watchfully attended to, a tenderness towards all creatures made subject to us will be experienced, and a care felt in us that we do not lessen that sweetness of life in the animal creation which the great Creator intends for them under our government.

"Fourth of sixth month.—Wet weather, high winds, and so dark that we could see but a little way. I per-

ceived our seamen were apprehensive of the danger of missing the channel, which I understood was narrow. In a while it grew lighter, and they saw the land and knew where we were. Thus the Father of Mercies was pleased to try us with the sight of dangers, and then graciously, from time to time, deliver us from them; thus sparing our lives, that in humility and reverence we might walk before him and put our trust in him. About noon a pilot came off from Dover, where my beloved friend Samuel Emlen went on shore and thence to London, about seventy-two miles by land; but I felt easy in staying in the ship.

"Seventh of sixth month and first of the week.—A clear morning, we lay at anchor for the tide, and had a parting meeting with the ship's company, in which my heart was enlarged in a fervent concern for them, that they may come to experience salvation through Christ. Had a head-wind up the Thames; lay sometimes at anchor; saw many ships passing, and some at anchor near; and I had large opportunity of feeling the spirit in which the poor bewildered sailors too generally live. That lamentable degeneracy which so much prevails in the people employed on the seas so affected my heart that I cannot easily convey the feeling I had to another.

"The present state of the seafaring life in general appears so opposite to that of a pious education, so full of corruption and extreme alienation from God, so full of the most dangerous examples to young people, that in looking towards a young generation I feel a care for them, that they may have an education different from the present one of lads at sea, and that all of us who are acquainted with the pure gospel spirit may lay this case to heart, may remember the lamentable corruptions which attend the conveyance of merchandise across the seas, and so abide in the love of Christ that, being delivered from the entangling expenses of a curious, delicate, and luxurious life, we may learn contentment with a little, and pro-

mote the seafaring life no further than that spirit which leads into all truth attends us in our proceedings."*

In the very year of Woolman's death was born he who sang, as it were in unconscious commemoration of this good Friend:

"He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

"He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

* Woolman's "Journal," Whittier's edition, Boston, 1871; pp. 254–256

CHAPTER V.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

Benjamin Franklin, 1706–1790.

THE service done by Benjamin Franklin to the mind of America, in the eighteenth century, was great and high. He followed the earnest theologians who, intent upon making New England the garden of the Lord, merged the idea of the commonwealth in that of the theocracy. He preceded, in a part of his important labors, the nation-makers of the period between 1760 and 1790, who attracted the attention of European thinkers, and deeply affected the future statecraft of the world. But when colonialism was developing into nationality, Franklin carried its personal message to Europe, and by his previously acquired reputation, by his learning and persistence, by his catholic ability, and most of all, perhaps, by his tact, impressed foreign diplomats and students with the idea that intellectual weight could be found in men and measures west of the Atlantic. If Franklin could have spent his life in the pursuits of science his reputation would hardly have been higher, in that general department, than it is at present. If, on the other hand, he had not spent time in scientific investigations—to him, in a sense, a recreation and avocation rather than a

vocation—his diplomatic labors, his work in aiding his strong-minded contemporaries in nation-building, and his practical creation of the United States post-office, would have given him a firm reputation at a time when, in American politics, lived and worked such men as Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and George Washington. His personality was as strongly-marked as that of any of the five just named, and his breadth of achievement—though not of tastes—more conspicuous than that of the versatile Jefferson himself. If this seem high praise, it has been amply confirmed by a century of criticism. Franklin's faults were not few; he was personally culpable and intellectually limited, as we shall see in this study of his character; but when all deductions are made, the great and human figure of Franklin still arouses interest and enthusiasm in an unusual degree—largely because he was a product characteristically American.

His youth.

Franklin was a Boston boy by birth, his natal day having been in the sixth year of the eighteenth century, the beginning of which seemed to mark the modern period of the world's history. His father had come from England twenty-four years before, the family being of the class which, in the somewhat aristocratic democracy of Massachusetts Bay, could be called no more than respectable. Most of the Boston notables in the eighteenth century were members of the higher families, and in due time went to Harvard College. Not such was Franklin's fortune; he was taken from school when a little fellow of nine years and set to

work to help his father in his business, that of a tallow-chandler and soap-boiler. Three years wore away in this humdrum life, when the boy became an "apprentice" in the printing-house of his brother James. At that time the periodical press was just beginning to have a real existence. Addison's *Spectator* had been familiar in Boston for a few years, and when James Franklin started, 1721, his *New England Courant*, the second American newspaper, young Franklin was minded to try to write essays of the Addison-Steele order. While lacking any systematic education, he had always been an omnivorous reader; and though few books were then available, he had sensibly selected many standards of the day, and of the rich seventeenth century. That impalpable thing which we call style he had absorbed, at least in part; and his native good-sense soon removed him from merely imitative work. The "art of putting things" in written words was really introduced by Franklin to American readers. These vigorous and readable articles in the *Courant* were at first contributed by Franklin without his brother's knowledge; when the secret came out James did not bestow upon the earnest young scribbler the praise which had been expected; an estrangement deepened, and the most promising lad yet born in New England sold some of his few and precious books, and late in 1723, aged seventeen, betook himself to Philadelphia, of which he was to become the most distinguished citizen.

Penniless and friendless, his trade stood him in good stead, and he found employment in the printing-

house of one Keimer, a Jew. "The printer," in those days, combined the functions of the modern publisher and editor, though the public usually learned when the printer—like Keimer—was not an intellectual force. Franklin, still a boy, soon came to have a little local renown as the brains of the Keimer establishment. So illustrious a personage, presumably, as was Sir William Keith, governor of Pennsylvania, "patronized" him, in the old-fashioned sense; and on the strength of Keith's untrustworthy promises to set him up in business, Franklin went to London in the winter of 1724–5, only to repeat his poverty-stricken Philadelphia experience. Type-setting supported him until the middle of 1726, when he returned to Philadelphia, with the promise of a clerkship, which, having got, he soon lost by the death of his employer. A year or two more with Keimer was followed by Franklin's instalment in an office of his own, his capitalist being a fellow-compositor named Meredith. This was in 1729; in the same year he bought of Keimer *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, a paper established to forestall a journalistic scheme of Franklin's, and boasting at the time of its purchase a subscription-list of ninety names. Franklin's Boston editorial knack was applied to the Philadelphia situation, and, indeed, to subjects of general colonial interest; and by it *The Pennsylvania Gazette* first made Franklin a man of note. Neither Boston nor New York could boast, at that time, a journal really rivalling this able periodical. In its columns Franklin made his mind felt as a force in many ways; and at this time, sensibly, he was

remedying, by constant study of several languages, the defects of his early education.

Franklin as a man of letters.

At this period of Franklin's life it was almost as evident as it is now that he was to be a man of affairs as truly as a scholar; and that he was not to seek or to win a distinctly literary reputation. Literature for its own sake was not to be cultivated in America until more than half a century later. New England ministers had written to further the theological cause; politicians in New England, New York, Pennsylvania, and the South were soon to write that they might promote great political reforms; Franklin had already begun his voluminous and miscellaneous contributions to printed matter, but not as an author. His "works" fill a goodly row of octavos, but how miscellaneous is their character! Adams, in Boston, was ever writing to the papers in order to help his political work; Franklin wrote as a journalist, a social moralist, an early scientist, a politician, or a diplomatist, for ends implied in these words. His longest writing was his "Autobiography," and thus he showed the correctness of his own estimate of himself. That estimate was that the man Franklin stood behind all his words and deeds, and that his written and printed words, in particular, were parts of a personality, not an artistic product or series of products. The same statement applies to his few orations. The work of the newspaper writer, the man of scientific pursuits, the statesman, the orator, or even the almanac-maker, may approach literature, and may become a part of literature; but the aims and attainments of

the working force, within or without literature, and of the man of letters, are not to be subjected to the same standards.

It would be easy to make long quotations from Franklin's Addisonian Essays,* and to show from them that he possessed a pleasant style, a due share of wit, a helpful purpose to reform Philadelphia foibles and follies, a well-read mind, a touch of pathos, and some other qualities deemed necessary to equip a member of *The Spectator's* school. But nearly all of the great body of imitators of Steele and Addison are now unread, and their amiable lucubrations are forgotten. If Doctor Johnson as essayist is neglected by his nineteenth-century readers, while Doctor Johnson the man is one of the best-known figures in English literary history, Doctor Franklin need not complain if he has met a similar fate. Indeed, the parallel is somewhat close, though Johnson considered himself one of the first authors, as well as first forces, of his time, while Franklin was much more modest. The truth about Franklin as a miscellaneous writer—a truth which any one may verify by a day's reading in his collected works—is that most of his productions, while respectable, of wide range, well-written, sensible, and telling, are not of the highest rank, and that, measured by the tests of English literature between 1725 and 1775, they are commonplace. From the several editions of his works but three things stand out because of inherent literary merit:

* Such, for instance, as those entitled The Busy-Body, contributed by him to *The Weekly Mercury*, 1729, published in Philadelphia by Andrew Bradford—a rival of Keimer.

his "Autobiography," his highly important papers on electricity, and the maxims in "Poor Richard's Almanac"—the last being chief and sufficient in themselves to perpetuate his fame as a writer.

"Poor Richard's Almanac."

The almanac, however popular and however indispensable, is not usually considered the highest or most permanent form of literature. It was the achievement of Benjamin Franklin to give to his series of "Poor Richard's Almanac" (begun in 1733) a reputation both national and lasting; and to make it, actually, a means of social education. "Wise saws and modern instances" still form an indispensable part of the almanac, and Franklin showed a knack in making proverbs that not only put his rivals out of sight, but, so far as they went, showed him to be worthy of mention beside his transatlantic contemporary, Alexander Pope. As an almanac-seer, Franklin was neither a pioneer nor a creator; he adapted freely, but he used, by original and quoted words, a medium of popular instruction as it had not been used before. Benjamin Franklin, printer, as "Richard Saunders, Philomath," for a quarter of a century provided the people with saws, proverbs, and bits of homely advice which were conned and repeated by thousands, and so effectively taught principles of common-sense, economy, and prudence that they actually increased Philadelphia's stock of ready money, and helped to make its vicinity the home of frugality and "forehandedness." Ten thousand copies made a great circulation for those days; and the pamphlets were worn to pieces by their eager owners.

What sort of wisdom did Franklin teach in these homely pages? "Never leave that till to-morrow which you can do to-day." "One to-day is worth two to-morrows." "God helps them that help themselves." "Plough deep while sluggards sleep." "Dost thou love life, then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of." "Three removes are as bad as a fire." "Little boats should keep near shore." "Little strokes fell large oaks." "He that goes a-borrowing goes a-sorrowing." "Creditors have good memories." "If you would have a faithful servant and one that you like, serve yourself." "The cat in gloves catches no mice." "Who dainties love shall beggars prove." "Fools make feasts and wise men eat them." "Though I had first determined to buy stuff for a new coat, I went away resolved to wear my old one a little longer." By such aphorisms, invented or adapted, Franklin strove to help his fellows. Their general drift is expressed in the famous dictum, which Franklin did not invent, but which is popularly credited to him, that "Honesty is the best policy." "Poor Richard" gave little advice that could be accounted spiritual or ideal. His aim was to make people frugal, industrious, and prudent—worldly-wise in the better sense. If we look to him for what he did not pretend to offer—for what, indeed, his very nature made it impossible to offer—we are disappointed. If we turn to him as a "guide, philosopher, and friend," in the practical and commonplace affairs of life, we get useful counsel from his every-day wisdom. His method we shall find reproduced, and in some ways

improved, by one or two later American humorists, as, indeed, it had been anticipated, in a certain degree, from the days of Solomon and the sages of Greece.

Franklin, the philanthropist.

"Poor Richard's Almanac" is but one of the productions of Franklin which emphasize the fact that he was a man of remarkable versatility. Not even the two great Mathers had a broader range, or were fonder of dabbling in all learning, and neither of the Mathers equalled Franklin in sound sense or catholicity of spirit. Cotton Mather, as a theologian, indeed, was as learned as was Franklin in his capacity of statesman or of scientist; but Mather's work has been largely superseded, while Franklin's has been developed. Mather worked sincerely for his kind, and wrote a practical book to which Franklin himself acknowledged deep indebtedness: "Bonifacius," "an essay upon the good that is to be devised and designed, with proposals of unexceptionable methods to do good in the world." But Franklin put these beneficent principles into practice more successfully than could Mather. "What *he* has said, *I* will do"; said the second orator in a stump-debate in the country; and so Franklin seems to say by his deeds. To develop journalism; to make people industrious and frugal; to start the first American magazine (The General Magazine and Historical Chronicle, Philadelphia, 1741); to secure the opening of a library in Philadelphia (1721); to promote the establishment of the American Philosophical Society (1743) and the University of Pennsylvania (1749); to organize a postal

system for the colonies a quarter of a century before their independence; to draw up plans for colonial union; to be a leader in Congress; to aid in the preparation of the Declaration of Independence, which he signed; to make the new little country respected in European courts; and to sit in the Constitutional Convention of 1787—all this, surely, was sufficient honor for Franklin, who seemed to become the Bonifacius of whom Mather had dreamed. And in his great electrical experiments, showing that lightning is electricity, and inventing the lightning-rod, he worked toward giving the world a benefit scarcely less than that conferred by Watt and Stephenson. He was no theologian, as his youthful "Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity" (London, 1725) proved to him clearly enough, by his own subsequent statement; but the "works side" of faith he made very serviceably manifest. And, with all his practicality, he was a philosopher, both in the old-fashioned American sense of the word (meaning physicist) and in the correct signification. If his philosophy was not very ambitious nor very ideal, it was serviceable to its time. Franklin the scientist was esteemed by Buffon; Franklin the statesman was called "the genius which has freed America," by Mirabeau; but Franklin the writer also won the praise of Hume, who naturally liked a man having, in his utilitarianism, some points of mental kinship with himself.

It was impossible, in view of his personal character and the needs of the times, that Franklin should not enter, and remain in, public life. With the

affairs of city, colony, and nation he became closely connected. In 1736 he began his political work as clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly or Legislature, of which he soon afterward became a member. In 1737 he became deputy-postmaster of Philadelphia, and started for that city the first regular fire-company and police-force that the colonies could boast. Street-paving, the care of the sick, the organization of the soldiery, and many miscellaneous works of the sort, owed much to his helping hand. By 1754, says his most competent editor and biographer,* Franklin "had become the most important man in the colony of Pennsylvania." In that year, at a conference of commissioners of the colonies at Albany, to consult as to means of defence in the difficulties with France, Franklin prepared a plan for colonial union (with a president-general appointed by the king, and an elected general council) which, though not adopted, foreshadowed the events of twenty years later. In 1757, the Pennsylvania Assembly having come to a serious disagreement with the "proprietors" of Pennsylvania, Thomas Penn and Richard Penn, sons of William, Franklin was sent to London as a special commissioner to plead the Assembly's cause. The Penns had demanded that, in the taxation to support British troops during the French-and-Indian war in America, their own estates be exempt; Franklin secured, in the face of a hostile king and ministry, a stipulation that only the unsurveyed lands of the Penns should be untaxed. The right of a col-

Franklin's public career.

* John Bigelow.

onial assembly to tax all colonial residents, and, indeed, to have its tax-laws obeyed, was included in this compromise. While in England on this mission Franklin received the honorary title (from the University of St. Andrews) which made him Doctor Franklin for the rest of his days. His journalistic taste for pamphleteering led him to put forth, in 1760, an argument, in the garb of historical fiction, for the continuance of the war with France; and a similar paper was influential in leading the British ministry to retain its Canadian possessions. At that time some were arguing that colonies were a drain on the mother-country, which broad proposition Franklin denied. The future of British commerce, and the populous nation to grow up in the New World, he plainly foresaw and vigorously foretold.

Returning home in 1762, Franklin, having lost his seat in the Assembly through the opposition of the Penns, was nevertheless sent to London once more, in the matter of the continued difficulties with the proprietaries, which, in the face of grave complications preluding the Revolution, were not to be settled until the State of Pennsylvania ultimately bought their rights. At this time the world-famous "stamp-act" had been proposed, whereby the colonists were to be taxed without representation, toward the expenses of the just-closed French war. Franklin worked hard to prevent the passage of the act, but urged making the best of it when it had been adopted by Parliament. The measure was so intensely unpopular in the colonies that even this conservatism put Franklin some-

Franklin and the Stamp Act.

what out of favor. In 1765, however, Parliament re-examined the question, and Franklin gave clear and cogent testimony before it, on the stamp-matter and American affairs in general. This testimony undoubtedly caused the repeal of the act, and Franklin's American popularity rose to more than its former height. He was more than beloved, he was trusted. Subsequent taxation, imposed by the angry Tories, of course embittered America once more, but took away nothing from the honor paid to Franklin. During his ten-year stay in England, as accredited agent of Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Georgia, he strove zealously for compromise and conciliation, but always as an American patriot, and in opposition to Parliamentary law-making for colonies. Having exhausted his powers and lost his favor in London, he returned to Philadelphia in 1775, just after the battles of Lexington and Concord.

Franklin in the Revolution.

He was in time to take an active part in Revolutionary measures. At once elected to the Continental Congress, he became one of its trusted leaders, rendering great service in committees and on the floor, and organizing, as postmaster-general, the colonial postal service which was afterwards developed into the complete intercolonial system. A little later he went to Canada, in an unsucessful attempt to enlist Canadian aid in the war; and, as has been said, he was one of the committee whence came the Declaration of Independence. Having presided over the first constitutional convention of the new State of Pennsylvania,

he was elected (late in the memorable year of 1776) member of a committee to go to France and try to win the sympathy and help of that nation. His associates were John Adams and Arthur Lee. In Paris he was already the best known American, and shared the renown accorded to the most eminent scientists of France itself. On his arrival, charged with an extraordinary mission, representing political ideas already dear to many Frenchmen, and seeming to them the incarnation of anti-English sentiment, his popularity rose to a height which would have turned the head of a weaker man. In 1777 the Franco-American alliance was formed, of course largely through his influence; in 1778 he became American minister to France; and thereafter his services in continuing the friendly union, and in securing loans from France to the United States, were important. Seeking to resign in 1781, because of age and ill-health, Congress refused to accept the resignation, and Franklin continued to serve his country. To his former work was added the task (with John Adams and John Jay) of negotiating peace with Great Britain. Not often is any nation represented by an abler committee. The various steps towards the peace were taken, and in 1785 Franklin returned home, being succeeded in France by Thomas Jefferson. His general reception was that due to his attainments, services, and now venerable age; and he was soon in the harness again, as "President of Pennsylvania," and member of the Constitutional Convention of 1787. The adopted

His French mission.

The Constitution of the United States.

governmental scheme giving the States equal representation in the Senate, while the membership of the House of Representatives is based on population, was Franklin's. The sage died April 17, 1790, aged eighty-four.

This active life is, in part, faithfully and entertainingly chronicled in his autobiography, which, next to his Poor Richard sayings, has done much to spread and perpetuate his fame among many people in many lands. With him the habit of writing was inveterate; his papers cover all sorts of subjects, from aeronautics to the taxation of the Colonies; from the properties of electricity to the restraints that should be set around luxury; from privateering to the principles affecting the spread of population. He was a conservative radical; a thrifty and afterward rich handicraftsman; a moralist who tried to atone for his early immoralities; a statesman lacking the highest ambition, and almost destitute of idealism and spirituality, but with hands unstained with avarice or self-seeking. His pen-portrait of himself could hardly fail to be interesting; one American critic* even claims that "the perennial charm of his autobiography is like that of Robinson Crusoe." The book was current for years in a wretchedly-edited and manifestly imperfect edition; and it was not until 1868 that an authoritative text was put before the public. John Bigelow, one of Franklin's successors at the French court, secured the original manuscript three quarters of a

"The Autobiography," written 1771–1789.

* George William Curtis, in the Editor's Easy Chair of *Harper's Magazine*, July, 1868, p. 274.

century after the writer's death, and has twice issued corrected editions. This manuscript has had a curious history; the long-current edition (edited by William Temple Franklin, grandson) was printed from a copy; and many impressions issued in London, Dublin, Paris, New York, etc., were of various degrees of inaccuracy. Mr. Bigelow intimates that the British government, by money stipend perhaps, induced William Temple Franklin to delay the issue of his grandfather's works. But the whole story, now that a good text is available, belongs to bibliography, not literary history.

Let us look, in a few extracts from the autobiography, at the man and the author whom Edward Laboulaye calls a "born moralist," "kind-hearted, a devoted patriot, and one of the sincerest sons of humanity," and whom a certain American, Jefferson Davis, has declared * to be "the incarnation of the peddling tuppenny Yankee."

Why Franklin wrote "The Autobiography."

DEAR SON:—I have ever had pleasure in obtaining any little anecdotes of my ancestors. You may remember the inquiries I made among the remains of my relations when you were with me in England, and the journey I undertook for that purpose. Imagining it may be equally agreeable to you to know the circumstances of my life, many of which you are yet unacquainted with, and expecting the enjoyment of a week's uninterrupted leisure in my present country retirement, I sit down to write them for you. To which I have besides some other inducements. Having emerged from the poverty and obscurity in which I was born and bred, to a state of affluence and some degree of reputation in

* As quoted by Curtis, *Harper's Magazine*, July, 1868, p. 274.

the world, and having gone so far through life with a considerable share of felicity, the conducing means I made use of, which, with the blessing of God, so well succeeded, my posterity may like to know, as they may find some of them suitable to their own situations, and therefore fit to be imitated. That felicity, when I reflected on it, has induced me sometimes to say, that were it offered to my choice, I should have no objection to a repetition of the same life from its beginning, only asking the advantages authors have in a second edition to correct some faults of the first. So I might, besides correcting the faults, change some sinister actions and events of it for others more favorable. But though this were denied, I should still accept the offer. Since such a repetition is not to be expected, the next thing like living one's life over again seems to be a recollection of that life, and to make that recollection as durable as possible by putting it down in writing.

God and man.

And now I speak of thanking God. I desire with all humility to acknowledge that I owe the mentioned happiness of my past life to His kind providence, which led me to the means I used and gave them success. My belief in this induces me to *hope*, though I must not *presume*, that the same goodness will still be exercised toward me, in continuing that happiness, or enabling me to bear a fatal reverse, which I may experience as others have done; the complexion of my future fortune being known to Him only in whose power it is to bless to us even our afflictions.

A philosophical venture at the age of nineteen.

At Palmer's [printing-house, London, 1725] I was employed in composing [setting type] for a second edition of Wollaston's "Religion of Nature." Some of his reasonings not appearing to me well founded, I wrote a little metaphysical piece in which I made remarks on them. It was entitled a "Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain." I inscribed it to my friend Ralph;

I printed a small number. It occasioned my being more considered by Mr. Palmer as a young man of some ingenuity, tho' he seriously expostulated with me upon the principles of my pamphlet, which to him appeared abominable. My printing this tract was another erratum.* . . . My pamphlet by some means falling into the hands of one Lyons, a surgeon, author of a book entitled "The Infallibility of Human Judgment," it occasioned an acquaintance between us. He took great notice of me, called on me often to converse on those subjects, carried me to the Horns, a pale ale-house in —— Lane, Cheapside, and introduced me to Dr. Mandeville, author of "The Fable of the Bees," who had a club there, of which he was the soul, being a most facetious, entertaining companion. Lyons, too, introduced me to Dr. Pemberton, at Batson's coffee-house, who promised to give me an opportunity, some time or other, of seeing Sir Isaac Newton, of which I was extremely desirous; but this never happened.

Before I enter upon my public appearance in business, it may be well to let you know the then state of my mind with regard to my principles and morals, that you may see how far those influenc'd the future events of my life. My parents had early given me religious impressions, and brought me through my childhood piously in the Dissenting way. But I was scarce fifteen, when, after doubting by turns of several points, as I found them disputed in the different books I read, I began to doubt of Revelation itself. Some books against Deism fell into my hands; they were said to be the substance of sermons preached at Boyle's Lectures. It happened that they wrought an effect on me quite contrary

A later opinion of this tract.

* Only a hundred copies were printed, of which a few were given away, and the rest burned. Franklin afterward grew "disgusted" with metaphysical reasoning. Mr. Bigelow, in his edition of the Autobiography, here adds a note to the effect that "no copy of this tract is now known to be in existence."

to what was intended by them; for the arguments of the Deists, which were quoted to be refuted, appeared to me much stronger than the refutations; in short, I soon became a thorough Deist. My arguments perverted some others, particularly Collins and Ralph; but, each of them having wrong'd me greatly without the least compunction, and recollecting Keith's conduct towards me (who was another free-thinker), and my own towards Vernon and Miss Read, which at times gave me great trouble, I began to suspect that this doctrine, tho' it might be true, was not very useful. My London pamphlet, which had for its motto these lines of Dryden:

> Whatever is, is right. Though purblind man
> Sees but a part o' the chain, the nearest link:
> His eyes not carrying to the equal beam
> That poises all above;

and from the attributes of God, his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, concluded that nothing could possibly be wrong in the world, and that vice and virtue were empty distinctions, no such things existing, appeared now not so clever a performance as I once thought it; and I doubted whether some error had not insinuated itself unperceiv'd into my argument, so as to infect all that follow'd, as is common in metaphysical reasonings.

Franklin's later philosophy of life.

I grew convinc'd that *truth*, *sincerity* and *integrity* in dealings between man and man were of the utmost importance to felicity of life; and I form'd written resolutions, which still remain in my journal book, to practice them ever while I lived. Revelation had indeed no weight with me, as such; but I entertain'd an opinion that, though certain actions might not be bad *because* they were forbidden by it, or good *because* it commanded them, yet probably those actions might be forbidden *because* they were bad for us, or commanded *because* they were beneficial to us, in their own natures, all the circumstances of things considered. And this persua-

sion, with the kind hand of Providence, or some guardian angel, or accidental favorable circumstances and situations, or all together, preserved me, thro' this dangerous time of youth, and the hazardous situations I was sometimes in among strangers, remote from the eye of my father, without any willful gross immorality or injustice, that might have been expected from my want of religion. I say willful, because the instances I have mentioned had something of *necessity* in them, from my youth, inexperience, and the knavery of others. I had therefore a tolerable character to begin the world with; I valued it properly and determined to preserve it.

Franklin was immoral in his youth; his only son was illegitimate; he repented of his fault, made such reparation as he could, and lived a better life; his early deism (to use the old term) became a reverential theism; but the most charitable judgment cannot call him a spiritual man. His religious attitude is of great interest, preceding, as it did, such important movements in Europe and America. He respected all forms of religion, in their essentials; did not strive to undermine others' opinions of the advantages of their peculiar beliefs; and, though he "seldom attended any public worship," he regularly paid his church subscription. He disagreed specially with the Calvinists, and was once greatly disgusted because no morality was preached in a sermon on the text: "Whatsoever things are true," etc. After this sermon he stayed at home and used a "little Liturgy or form of prayer, entitled, Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion," which he had composed in 1728. Much later, however, he advised his daughter to go to church and use the prayer-book,

even if she disliked the sermon or the preacher. "I never doubted," says he, "the existence of the Deity; that he made the world, and govern'd it by his Providence; that the most acceptable service of God was the doing good to man; that our souls are immortal; and that all crime will be punished, and virtue rewarded, either here or hereafter." This little creed, which he deemed the essential part of all religions, led him to respect the churches according as they conformed to it and made few useless additions to it; and it lay at the root of his well-known simplicity, industry, and frugality, of which many naive and amusing records are given in the "Autobiography."

Such a moralist, accustomed to write maxims for the guidance of others, of course drew up from time to time, especially in youth, schemes for self-regulation,—at one time he even "conceiv'd the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection." This failing, he set before him the task of "acquiring the habitude" of such virtues (thirteen in all) as the following, for example:

Franklin's list of virtues.

1. *Temperance.* Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.—2. *Silence.* Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.—4. *Resolution.* Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.—5. *Frugality.* Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; *i. e.*, waste nothing.—*Industry.* Lose no time; be always employ'd in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.—9. *Moderation.* Avoid extreams; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.—11. *Tranquillity.* Be not disturbed at trifles, or at acci-

dents common or unavoidable.—13. *Humility.* Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

A bright Frenchwoman once said to me, with reference to the petition "Thy will be done," in the Lord's Prayer: "Why say any more? that is enough." Similarly, one might say that Franklin's fourth rule included "the whole duty of man." But this patient and methodical arrangement of life was not exactly like the inspection of one's spiritual *ilia* in which so many conscientious religionists have indulged in all ages; and it certainly proved beneficial to himself and his fellows. Franklin possessed not a spark of the fire which burned in Dante or Savonarola, but his life-success can be summed up in the words: *he made the most of himself.*

His religious opinions may be dismissed with one more quotation—an "intended creed" for a possible new sect or school projected by Franklin, and never deemed impracticable by him, if one man should throw heart and soul into its propagation. This creed, he thought, contained "the essentials of every known religion," and was free from every thing that might shock the professors of any religion. It was:

Franklin's universal creed.

That there is one God, who made all things.

That he governs the world by his providence.

That he ought to be worshiped by adoration, prayer, and thanksgiving.

But that the most acceptable service of God is doing good to man.

That the soul is immortal.

And that God will certainly reward virtue and punish vice either here or hereafter.

On this solid basis the "Autobiography"—and the life it chronicled—went busily and cheerily on. The book tells us how Franklin organized a city watch and fire company in Philadelphia; started an academy and a philosophical society; experimented with electricity; invented the open stove still called after his name, and refused to take a patent for it; worked up from the Philadelphia common-council to the Continental Congress, and diplomacy, and treaty-making; concocted plans for a death-dealing militia on the one hand, and hospitals and hygienic street-cleaning on the other; refused to become Colonel Franklin or General Franklin, but rejoiced in the peaceable honors of A.M. and LL.D., the first being given by Harvard and Yale "in consideration of my improvements and discoveries in the electric branch of natural philosophy"; received the Copley medal and became a member of the Royal Society, being "excus'd the customary payments, which would have amounted to twenty-five guineas"; and so on, in things great and small. The book is a fragment, but it is a fragment which has formed the basis of all the many biographies of Franklin. It is idle to compare the "Autobiography" with "Robinson Crusoe," as a piece of literature, but it certainly is wholesome and appetizing reading. Benjamin Franklin the author cannot be rated among writers of the first class; but it is seldom that the good motions of the world get jogged along by so sturdy and helpful a force as was Benjamin Franklin the man.

CHAPTER VI.

POLITICAL LITERATURE.

THE American literature which we have thus far studied is now interesting in many ways, and was not less interesting at the time of its first appearance. Much of it—as well as a considerable body of writing now justly forgotten or ignored—was regarded with pride by authors and readers alike. In poetry there were "tenth muses"; in theology there were mighty makers of systems; in the "literature of travel" there were pretentious chroniclers and resonant describers. It should not be forgotten, however, that these local magnates were little esteemed abroad. Speculators, geographers, and a part of the general public might read some of the wonderful accounts of life and scenery in the new world. Now and then a theologian purchased and studied one of the folios or less ambitious pamphlets produced by American divines. But the great mass of American literary productions had none but a home market. It will be remembered that thus far we have found not one American book of the first literary rank. Benjamin Franklin's great European reputation was personal, not literary; he was esteemed and listened to as

Early American literature and European readers.

diplomat, scientist, individual force, not man of letters. Jonathan Edwards' famous treatise, so potent at home, made no great stir abroad, and the interest aroused by it in England and Scotland, such as it was, of course depended upon its philosophical merit, not its literary. As a mere piece of writing, indeed, its rank was not high.

American political writing.

But we come now to a class of literature which was perforce read and studied in Europe. Thinking men might ignore the American traveller, theologian, poet, but the American political orator spoke so that his words resounded across the Atlantic; and the authors of the political literature of the colonies and the nascent nation did not lack distant readers. Their foreign students, to be sure, heeded less their manner than their matter. It was the American *word*, not the American grace that won attention; but henceforth one division of the growing literature of the west was to have its attentive public. When we consider the state and the wealth of English literature in the seventeenth century, and even in the eighteenth, it is at once apparent that London, Oxford, and Edinburgh had no need to concern themselves with the comparatively weak and poor books and pamphlets coming from America. But when American orators and politicians were attacking cherished British traditions, and threatening to curtail or destroy British power in the New World, it became necessary to listen to what they were saying, and either to accept or to repel the force of their words.

The most potent voice in Massachusetts was that

of Samuel Adams, a Harvard graduate of 1740, a patriot and radical from his youth, intensely in earnest, poor and incorruptible, a man of business who sacrificed private gains to the good of the colonial cause. The Saxon folk-mote, transferred to England, and thence to the American colonies, became the New England town-meeting. Boston was the chief New England town, and of the assembly of its citizens Samuel Adams was the natural leader. No other American had so good an opportunity to mould the form of a democracy in its best condition, and Adams made the most of his opportunity. A Calvinistic Congregationalist in religion, he applied to politics the principles of equality upon which he insisted in church order. Boston was somewhat leavened with aristocratic and Tory tendencies; against both he fought with a vigor which finally triumphed. To him fell a work in the North like that done by Thomas Jefferson in the South. Democratic principles carried too far become communistic; but extreme Federalism endangers the rights of the people. In the latter Adams saw the greater danger; and his work, fortunately, came at a time when the centrifugal force was more needed than the centripetal. He lived too soon to reap the highest political rewards in the new nation which owed so much to his efforts; and, indeed, when political parties appeared after the Revolution, Adams was more radical than the average New England voter; though he became State legislator, congressman, and governor. His work was that of a strong personal force, a pioneer, a destroyer of oppression,

Samuel Adams, 1722–1803.

an upbuilder of liberty. He was the central figure in the town-meeting; he framed and voiced its policy; he drew up important instructions or appeals to home and foreign officers or legislators; and his pen was almost constantly in his hand, for he wrote stirring articles for the people's newspaper in Boston. His signatures were many; now he was "Vindex," now "Valerius Poplicola," now "A Son of Liberty," but the purport of his utterances was ever the same. In his speeches, epistles, or memorials he put the spirit before the letter, the matter before the manner. What wonder that his force made him as obnoxious to the home government as he was popular among the colonists? When a general pardon was offered the patriots, the year before the Revolution, Adams was excepted, and was proud of the fact. His course was unswerving from first to last. When he presented his thesis as Master of Arts, at the age of twenty-one, he debated the question: "Whether it be Lawful to resist the Supreme Magistrate, if the Commonwealth cannot otherwise be preserved"; and this question his life-work answered in the affirmative. He was the "chief incendiary," said the Tories; the truest of patriots, thought the colonists.

Few now read Adams' "True Sentiments of America," "Circular Letter (1768) to each colonial legislature," "Appeal to the World," "Vindex" letters, or "Earnest Appeal to the People" (February, 1776, for independence). No collected edition of his writings—scattered and almost inaccessible—exists. But his intensity of thought, now calm, now fiery, his vigor of utterance, and his purpose in written or

spoken words, entitle him to some mention in a literary as well as a political history of America. When need was, he could write such finished sentences as this: "There is an English affection in the colonists towards the mother country, which will forever keep them connected with her to every valuable purpose, unless it shall be erased by repeated unkind usage on her part." The very next year (March 18, 1769) he wrote to the *Providence Gazette* his first portent of the division of the British nation:

> When I consider the corruption of Great Britain,—their load of debt,—their intestine divisions, tumults, and riots,—their scarcity of provisions,—and the Contempt in which they are held by the nations about them; and when I consider, on the other Hand, the State of the American Colonies with Regard to the various Climates, Soils, Produce, rapid Population, joined to the virtue of the Inhabitants,—I cannot but think that the Conduct of Old England towards us may be permitted by Divine Wisdom, and ordained by the unsearchable providence of the Almighty, for hastening a period dreadful to Great Britain.

Six years later the period came, and in 1776 Adams signed the Declaration of Independence, drawn up by his life-long friend and hearty admirer, Thomas Jefferson, and warmly favored by himself. His name, in point of time, may well stand at the head of the honorable list of American orators and statesmen who have contributed to literature. Many have surpassed him in distinctly literary reputation, and in the continued publication and circulation of their writings; few have been so influential in achieving to the full the aspirations of their lives.

The pre-Revolution orators and political writers of greatest ability and success were Samuel Adams, James Otis, and Josiah Quincy, Junior, in the North, and Patrick Henry in the South. Of these the work of Adams and Henry was the most solidly effective, but the immediate oratorical reputation of Otis was the greatest—certainly the greatest among the many Massachusetts speakers.

Pre-Revolution Orators.

James Otis, 1725–1783.

Otis, like Joseph Warren, was sometimes hasty, outstripping in his zeal even the radical Adams; sometimes he veered to conservatism; and the latter part of his life was overshadowed by increasing insanity. But in his prime he was esteemed the chief orator of the Revolutionary movement. His fat figure was not ungraceful; his plump face was courtly and handsome; his voice was strong and well modulated; his eye was piercing; and he was likened by the elder President Adams to "a flame of fire." Of the speech delivered by Otis in 1760, when Lieutenant-Governor Hutchinson had been appointed chief-justice, and was likely to favor the "writs of assistance" (promoting search for dutiable goods), Adams said: "With a promptitude of classical allusions, a depth of research, a rapid summary of historical events and dates, a profusion of legal authorities, a prophetic glance of his eye into futurity, and a torrent of impetuous eloquence, he hurried away every thing before him. American independence was then and there born; the seeds of patriots and heroes were then and there sown, to defend the vigorous youth, the *non sine diis animosus infans.* Every man of a crowded audience appeared

to me to go away, as I did, ready to take arms against writs of assistance. Then and there was the first scene of the first act of opposition to the arbitrary claims of Great Britain."

This five-hour speech against taxation without representation was a potent effort, but it cannot fairly be said that American independence was born on the utterance of Otis' flaming oration. Independence was a growth, not belonging alone to Otis, Adams, Jefferson, or Henry; not born at Boston, Philadelphia, or Williamsburg. But a great force must have rested in the oratory of one who commanded wild applause whenever he appeared, and who seemed to the colonists a veritable Pitt the elder. He was neither consistent nor discreet, but the public, often inconsistent and indiscreet, is apt to favor a spokesman of similar temper. Like Charles Sumner, the great Boston orator of the later century, he was dictatorial and vain, and like Sumner, he was made more popular by an unjust personal assault which he suffered. His eccentricities and misfortunes actually increased his temporary influence, and the public reluctantly gave up his leadership, even when his insanity was manifest. "He was like the huge cannon on the man-of-war, in Victor Hugo's story, that had broken from its moorings in the storm, and become a terror to those whom it formerly defended." *

Otis' reputation, like that of so many orators, is largely a matter of tradition. One of his best speeches, in popular estimation, was written by

* J. K. Hosmer: "Life of Samuel Adams," p. 355.

Lydia Maria Child long after his death, and printed in her novel, "The Rebels." His pamphlet called a "Vindication of the Conduct of the House of Representatives" (1762), pithily put the arguments which the colonies were to continue to advance for twenty years, by pen and sword. Two years later he put forth his "Rights of the British Colonists Asserted and Proved," from which I will quote that celebrated single sentence into which the author compressed his argument (not accepted by Samuel Adams) for colonial representation:

The sum of my argument is, that civil government is of God, that the administrators of it were originally the whole people: that they might have devolved it on whom they pleased: that this devolution is fiduciary, for the good of the whole: that by the British constitution this devolution is on the king, lords, and commons, the supreme, sacred, and uncontrollable legislative power, not only in the realm, but through the dominions: that by the abdication, the original compact was broken to pieces: that by the revolution it was renewed, and more firmly established, and the rights and liberties of the subject in all parts of the dominions more fully explained and confirmed: that in consequence of this establishment and the acts of succession and union, his Majesty George III. is rightful king and sovereign, and with his parliament, the supreme legislative of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, and the dominions thereunto belonging: that this constitution is the most free one, and by far the best now existing on earth: that by this constitution, every man in the dominions is a free man: that no part of his Majesty's dominions can be taxed without their consent: that every part has a right to be represented in the supreme or some subordinate

legislature: that the refusal of this would seem to be a contradiction in practice to the theory of the constitution: that the colonies are subordinate dominions, and are now in such a state, as to make it best for the good of the whole that they should not only be continued in the enjoyment of subordinate legislation, but be also represented in some proportion to their number and estate in the grand legislation of the nation: that this would firmly unite all parts of British empire, in the greatest peace and prosperity; and render it invulnerable and perpetual.

In the reported speeches by Otis there is less rhetorical elaboration than in this series of statements, drawn up for publication; and his spoken sentences were strengthened by an enthusiasm and personal force of which we now know only by tradition. The knot of Massachusetts orators of whom Otis was chief, were men of education, social standing, and marked ability; their cause was the cause of popular rights; and their burning words fell upon minds ready to catch every new influence against English oppression. The Tory or Loyalist party in Massachusetts did not lack men of integrity and intellectual strength, such as Governor Hutchinson, the historian; but the balance inclined heavily upon the other side. If Adams had possessed Otis' silver-tongued mastery of the multitude, or if Otis had shared Adams' dogged determination and ability as a manager, the renown of either would have been still more lasting, in the realm of political oratory. As it is, however, while the speeches of neither take literary rank with those of Chatham, Burke, or even Patrick Henry, among their contemporaries, their rhetorical triumphs were

immediate and lasting, if rhetoric be, as it used to be defined, the "art of persuasive oratory." They were orators who persuaded their hearers to undertake or share the most influential political and military movement of modern history. It must have seemed to Massachusetts men a touch of kinship and a heavenly sign of reward when their pet orator Otis, the "flame of fire," met instantaneous death by a lightning-stroke.

The young men of Massachusetts, like Joseph Warren and Josiah Quincy, Junior, sprang into the forum with an earnestness equal to that of their elders. The words of Quincy seem to modern readers more intense and more artlessly artistic than those of Otis. "In defence of our civil and religious rights," exclaimed young Quincy at the age of twenty-three, eight years before the Revolution began, "we dare oppose the world; with the God of armies on our side, even the God who fought our fathers' battles, we fear not the hour of trial, though the hosts of our enemies should cover the field like locusts. If this be enthusiasm, we will live and die enthusiasts." These words were not spoken, but printed in the Boston organ of the colonial spirit. Quincy, worn out by consumption, died at sea, in sight of the Massachusetts shore, just after the battles of Concord and Lexington; but Warren really fell an "enthusiast" at Bunker Hill. "If we have any respect for things sacred; any regard to the dearest treasure on earth; if we have one tender sentiment for posterity; if we would not be despised

Josiah Quincy, Jr., 1744–1775.

by the whole world, let us, in the most open, solemn manner, and with determined fortitude, swear,—we will die,—if we cannot live freemen." Quincy thus wrote eight years before Patrick Henry, in Virginia, flung forth those resonant words: "Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but, as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!" Quincy was even willing to be called traitor, if it be for his cause: "If to appear for my country is treason, and to arm for her defence is rebellion,—like my fathers, I will glory in the name of rebel and traitor, as they did in that of puritan and enthusiast." "Neither can it taint the unblemished honor of a son of freedom, though he should make his departure on the already prepared gibbet, or be dragged to the newly-erected scaffold for execution. . . . A crown of joy and immortality shall be his reward. The history of his life his children shall venerate." No American patriot met his death on the scaffold; had one thus died, his countrymen would have seen heaven's light descending upon his head, as in the pencil-picture which Victor Hugo drew of John Brown's hanging. But Quincy was no hot-headed communist; his advice was, of course, intensely earnest; but without such counsel and such determination the Revolution must have been a failure. Said he: "To hope for the protection of Heaven, without doing our duty, and exerting ourselves as becomes men, is to mock the Deity. Wherefore had man his reason, if it were not to di-

rect him? Wherefore his strength, if it be not his protection? To banish folly and luxury, correct vice and immorality, and stand immovable in the freedom in which we are free indeed, is eminently the duty of each individual, at this day. When this is done, we may rationally hope for an answer to our prayers for the whole counsel of God, and the invincible armor of the Almighty. However righteous our cause, we cannot, in this period of the world, expect a miraculous salvation. Heaven will undoubtedly assist us, if we act like men."

Quincy, like so many of his fellows, did act like a man. In his observations on the Boston Port Bill printed in 1774, he said: "Blandishments will not fascinate us, nor will threats of a 'halter' intimidate, For, under God, we are determined that, whereso-ever, whensoever, or howsoever we shall be called to make our exit, we will die freemen." He died, as I have said, a freeman just after

> "The embattled farmers stood
> And fired the shot heard round the world."

Patrick Henry, of Virginia, lacked that collegiate education which was an advantage to the Massachusetts orators of the Revolution. In Williamsburg, the capital of Virginia, the College of William and Mary stood at one end of Duke of Gloucester Street, and the Capitol building at the other. Henry received no culture at the college before he waxed eloquent in the Capitol; he was ill-read in the law, and ungainly in manner; but his up-country training, before he came to Williams-

Patrick Henry, 1736–1799.

burg, developed that self-reliance, and integrity, and strength which lay behind his seemingly spontaneous spoken words, and made him the leader, as well as the friend, of young Jefferson. For Virginia he was Otis and Adams in one,—both orator and political manager. Not many of his burning speeches have come down to us, but we well know what he was: one of the first orators of the eighteenth century. That famous speech before the Virginia convention of 1775, of which the most famous words have already been quoted here, would alone maintain his fame. What wonder that he carried all with him when he exclaimed with utter honesty, and yet with the highest rhetorical art: "There is no retreat but in submission and slavery. Our chains are forged. Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston"; and instantly added: "The war is inevitable, and let it come." Soberer, but not less effective, were such words as these: "I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging the future but by the past. And, judging by the past, I wish to know what there has been in the conduct of the British ministry to justify those hopes with which gentlemen have been pleased to solace themselves? Is it that insidious smile with which our petition has been lately received? Trust it not, sir; it will prove a snare to your feet. Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed with a kiss. Ask yourselves how this gracious reception comports with those warlike preparations which cover our waters and darken our land. Are fleets and armies necessary

to a work of love and reconciliation? . . . Those are the implements of war and subjugation, the last arguments to which kings resort. I ask, gentlemen, sir, what means this martial array, if its purpose be not to force us to submission."

Neither Patrick Henry, nor Josiah Quincy, nor any of the Continental leaders, was afraid of the epithet "traitor." Ten years before Henry, as above, urged Virginia to war, he had uttered his celebrated comparison, interrupted by cries of "treason" from the Speaker of the Virginia House of Burgesses: "Cæsar had his Brutus, Charles the First his Cromwell, and George the Third—*may profit by their example.* If *this* be treason, make the most of it." He who thus raised the alarm against English oppression, was not less a radical when the expediency of adopting the Federal Constitution was under consideration in the Virginia State Convention of 1788. Not a few of those who had most favored and helped to secure colonial independence, looked with concern upon the alleged danger of too strong a federal union at the expense of the rights of the States. In this fear Henry went far beyond Washington, and beyond the conservatively-democratic Jefferson. The war was over, and Henry, even more than Samuel Adams in Massachusetts, stood firmly against any new Toryism in the shape of Hamiltonian Federalism, taking the place of the confederacy that carried on the Revolution. Said he: "Even from that illustrious man who saved us by his valor, I would have a reason for his conduct; that liberty which he has given us by his valor tells

me to ask this reason, and sure I am, were he here he would give us that reason; but there are other gentlemen here who can give us this information. The people gave them no power to use their name. That they exceeded their power is perfectly clear." Henry and the other extreme anti-Federalists were frightened because the preamble of the Constitution began: "We, the *people* of the United States," instead of "We, the States"; hence this earnest appeal against the adoption of an instrument which has veritably proved a "palladium of liberty"—in spite of disunion abolitionists, and disunion slaveholders—for a hundred years. But Henry, the honest and able, spoke in 1788 as sincerely, though not as effectively or wisely, as in 1765 or 1775. He lived to see that he had exaggerated the dangers of a central government, of which Jefferson himself was soon to be the discreet head; but he was still the great orator when, in the appeal from which the above words were taken, he said:

The public mind, as well as my own, is extremely uneasy at the proposed change of government. Give me leave to form one of the number of those who wish to be thoroughly acquainted with the reasons of this perilous and uneasy situation, and why we are brought hither to decide on this great national question. I consider myself as the servant of the people of this commonwealth, as a sentinel over their rights, liberty, and happiness. I represent their feelings when I say that they are exceedingly uneasy, being brought from that state of full security which they enjoy, to the present delusive appearance of things. Before the meeting of the late Federal convention at Philadelphia, a general peace and an universal

tranquillity prevailed in this country, and the minds of our citizens were at perfect repose; but since that period they are exceedingly uneasy and disquieted. When I wished for an appointment to this convention my mind was extremely agitated for the situation of public affairs. I consider the republic to be in extreme danger. If our situation be thus uneasy, whence has arisen this fearful jeopardy? It arises from this fatal system; it arises from a proposal to change our government—a proposal that goes to the utter annihilation of the most solemn engagement of the States—a proposal of establishing nine States into a confederacy, to the eventual exclusion of four States. It goes to the annihilation of those solemn treaties we have formed with foreign nations . . . Those treaties bound us as thirteen States, confederated together. Yet here is a proposal to sever that confederacy. Is it possible that we shall abandon all our treaties and national engagements? And for what? . . . This proposal of altering our Federal government is of a most alarming nature: make the best of this new government —say it is composed by any thing but inspiration—you ought to be extremely cautious, watchful, jealous of your liberty; for instead of securing your rights, you may lose them forever. If a wrong step be now made, the republic may be lost forever. If this new government will not come up to the expectation of the people, and they should be disappointed, their liberty will be lost, and tyranny must and will arise. I repeat it again, and beg, gentlemen, to consider that a wrong step, made now, will plunge us into misery, and our republic will be lost.

The "wrong step" was taken by Virginia and other States; the Constitution was adopted, and the feeble Confederacy became the Democratic Nation. But who shall question, though Henry and Adams were better as revolutionary leaders than as con-

stitutional statesmen, their honesty, bravery, and eloquence?

The American nation was a growth, not a creation. For its beginnings we must look back of the adoption of the Constitution, or the treaty of peace, or the Declaration of Independence, or the guns of Concord and Lexington, or the Boston Tea-Party. The germs of independence lay in the local self-government of the colonies—indeed, in the folk-motes of the Saxons. But after the Revolution had begun, a few men of conspicuous discretion and ability, of differing views, but of essentially united purpose, may fairly, though not exclusively, be entitled to the epithet, Makers of the Nation. The work of some was before, as well as after, the constitutional period, but all had a prominent share in the work of starting and strengthening the new republic. These forceful men were Thomas Jefferson, the writer of the Declaration of Independence; Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, the authors of the Federalist papers; George Washington and John Adams, the first presidents of the United States; Fisher Ames; Thomas Paine; Albert Gallatin; John Marshall; and Joseph Story.

Makers of the Nation.

Thomas Jefferson, 1743–1826.

Thomas Jefferson, the first and greatest of American Democrats, in his lifetime as cordially hated by political enemies as revered by political and personal friends, now stands before us as one of the roundest and fullest characters in American history. All things considered, none of his contemporaries, with the possible exception of John Quincy

Adams, was so well educated a man. The slender advantages proffered by the College of William and Mary he had improved to the utmost, and had supplemented them by personal investigations and by association with some of the master-minds of the colony of Virginia. Though not an orator, he was a vigorous and effective writer. It was his lot to write the most famous political document in modern history; he was a voluminous and pleasing autobiographer and letter-writer, and he produced an impartial volume of notes on Virginia. An earnest Democrat and anti-Federalist, his course after the Revolution was more discreet and helpful than that of Patrick Henry, or even Samuel Adams. He pushed scientific studies beyond their usual limits, in those days; more than any other American statesman he promoted religious toleration; and in the University of Virginia, his creation, he anticipated many of the methods of modern university work—including the elective system of studies, the investigation of Anglo-Saxon as the earliest form of English, and the bestowal of academic degrees only as a reward of successful work. If the final political test, "What did he *do?*" be applied to Jefferson, the result is most favorable to his renown. Assemblyman, Congressman, foreign minister, Cabinet officer, President, educator, citizen, to him more than to any other man has been due the ascendancy of the Democratic party during the larger part of the nation's history.

When certain portions of a methodical state document pass into the honorable domain of familiar quotation, it may justly be concluded that they

phrase a general truth in apt words. The English-speaking world well remembers Jefferson's plain but sonorous introduction to the Declaration :

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal ; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed ; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

This was the new message of liberty, uttered to the world in no unmistakable phrase. In its defence the colonies could heartily say, with Jefferson's closing words in the same document : "With a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

When, just a quarter of a century later, Jefferson was called to the Presidency of the new nation, his inaugural words showed that he was fitted to apply to constitutional government the principles of a liberty

broad but never designed to be communistic or levelling: "All will bear in mind this sacred principle, that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will, to be rightful, must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal laws must protect, and to violate which would be oppression. . . . I know, indeed, that some honest men fear that a republican government cannot be strong; that this government is not strong enough. But would the honest patriot, in the full tide of successful experiment, abandon a government which has so far kept us free and firm, on the theoretic and visionary fear, that this government, the world's best hope, may, by possibility, want energy to preserve itself? I trust not. I believe this, on the contrary, the strongest government on earth. I believe it the only one where every man, at the call of the law, would fly to the standard of the law, and would meet invasions of the public order as his own personal concern. Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he then be trusted with the government of others?"

This faith, this belief that in a republic, "errors of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it," has been justified—despite grave past and present dangers—in time of foreign war, of civil strife, of excited or disputed elections, and of assassinations of presidents. So, too, the United States has done well in following Jefferson's creed favoring "equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuation, religious or political; peace,

commerce, and honest friendship with all nations,—entangling alliances with none; . . . freedom of religion; freedom of the press; freedom of person under the protection of habeas corpus; and trial by juries impartially selected." It is plain that Jefferson—though, like Samuel Adams, sometimes an extremist, sometimes tricky in the achievements of his designs, and always a managing politician, was a statesman of a high rank, and one who added to the literature of statecraft.

The Constitution of the United States.

After the Declaration came the Confederation, and after the Confederation, the Constitution. This important document was not adopted without long and anxious, sometimes bitter, debate. The opposition to it was not local, and was by no means restricted to those States which most earnestly espoused the "State-rights" idea. The Constitution, the work of many minds, was finally accepted, though by slender majorities in several of the States, because of the industrious efforts of many workers.

The Federalist.

The greatest political writings connected with the adoption of the Constitution are the series of papers known as The Federalist. This series may be described as an important political variation of the eighteenth century type of essay. Its eighty-five papers appeared, for the most part, in *The Independent Journal*, a New York semi-weekly, during the last months of 1787 and the first months of 1788. The support of New York State was doubtful, so "Publius," the writer, earnestly argued with its citizens concerning the advantages proffered by the Constitution. "Publius" was a triad, the members being

Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, the first two afterwards known as Federalists, the last as a Democrat. Hamilton, the Federalist leader, was the inspiring cause of these papers, of which he drew the plan, himself writing many. The general character of "The Federalist" is that of a statement of the basal principles of government, put into words easy of general comprehension, and accompanied by arguments concerning the advisability of the adoption of the Constitution under debate. Some of the statements are of universal application and lasting weight; others are *ad captandum* arguments addressed to prudence or even to selfishness. Not often, however, has so much political wisdom found utterance as in these essays. The Constitution having been attacked as ultra-conservative and semi-monarchical, "Publius" showed that its opponents were likely to favor the speedy dissolution of the republic. The time and purpose hardly favored the production of a calm and dispassionate treatise on government, which "The Federalist" certainly is not; but it contains, despite its lack of system, able discussions of many questions of national life and political science.

The closing words of Number XIV., printed in the *New York Packet*, November 30, 1787, and known to be one of Madison's contributions, illustrate the rhetorical and literary characteristics of the work at their best. This is Johnsonian English, already feeling the breath of a fresher day, and stirring with the intense purpose which pushed the Americans forward:

I submit to you, fellow-citizens, these considerations, in full confidence that the good sense which has so often marked your decisions will allow them their due weight and effect; and that you will never suffer difficulties, however formidable in appearance, or however fashionable the error on which they may be founded, to drive you into the gloomy and perilous scene into which the advocates of disunion would conduct you. Hearken not to the unnatural voice which tells you that the people of America, knit together as they are by so many cords of affection, can no longer live together as members of the same family; can no longer continue the mutual guardians of their mutual happiness; can no longer be fellow-citizens of one great, respectable, and flourishing empire. Hearken not to the voice which petulantly tells you that the form of government recommended for your adoption is a novelty in the political world; that it has never yet had a place in the theories of the wildest projectors; that it rashly attempts what it is impossible to accomplish. No, my countrymen, shut your ears against this unhallowed language. Shut your hearts against the poison which it conveys; the kindred blood which flows in the veins of American citizens, the mingled blood which they have shed in defence of their sacred rights, consecrate their union, and excite horror at the idea of their becoming aliens, rivals, enemies. And if novelties are to be shunned, believe me, the most alarming of all novelties, the most wild of all projects, the most rash of all attempts, is that of rending us in pieces, in order to preserve our liberties and promote our happiness. But why is the experiment of an extended republic to be rejected merely because it may comprise what is new? Is it not the glory of the people of America that whilst they have paid a decent regard to the opinions of former times and other nations, they have not suffered a blind veneration for antiquity, for custom, or for names, to overrule the suggestions of their own good sense, the knowledge of their own situa-

tion, and the lessons of their own experience? To this manly spirit posterity will be indebted for the possession and the world for the example of the numerous innovations displayed on the American theatre in favor of private rights and public happiness. Had no important steps been taken by the leaders of the Revolution for which a precedent could not be discovered, no government established of which an exact model did not present itself, the people of the United States might, at this moment, have been numbered among the melancholy victims of misguided councils; must at best have been laboring under the weight of some of those forms which have crushed the liberties of the rest of mankind. Happily for America, happily, we trust, for the whole human race, they pursued a new and more noble course. They accomplished a revolution which has no parallel in the annals of human society. They reared the fabrics of governments which have no model on the face of the globe. They formed the design of a great Confederacy which it is incumbent on their successors to improve and perpetuate. If their works betray imperfections, we wonder at the fewness of them. If they erred most in the structure of the Union, this was the work most difficult to be executed; this is the work which has been new modelled by the act of your Convention, and it is that act on which you are now to deliberate and decide.

This passage, perhaps the most eloquent in a series for the most part somewhat heavy in style, was written by Madison, whose contributions were undoubtedly abler than Hamilton's, or than the few papers by Jay. Madison's written words, like Burke's, have an eloquence for the reader even where they were never designed for delivery. But Madison, though afterwards elected President of the United States,

James Madison, 1751–1836.

John Jay, 1745–1829.

was a less important figure in the days of the making of the nation than was Alexander Hamilton, the Federalist leader. Hamilton, killed by Burr in a duel at the early age of forty-seven, left literary work filling nine octavo volumes, and his personal influence was far greater than his force as a writer. Over against Jefferson, the Democrat, stood Hamilton, the Federalist. If Jefferson, unchecked, would, as his enemies alleged, have moved toward French disorganization, Hamilton doubtless would have followed ultra-conservatism with still greater readiness. He fought for the Constitution and won it, but made no secret of his longing for a stronger document and a more centralized government.

Alexander Hamilton, 1757–1804.

The writings of Hamilton, like those of nearly all the politicians whose names are here under consideration, had no real literary motive. They were produced in the course of the life of a statesman, and all, whether written with greater or less care, were designed to further the ends of statecraft or of political management. Some are documents illustrating the making of history; others portray the character or personality of the writers; but nothing from Hamilton's pen sought distinctly artistic results. Alexander Hamilton, as has been said, strove to secure and to establish a constitutional government much firmer than the Confederation; and he afterwards would have still further consolidated the United States under the Constitution. Therefore he wrote on governmental questions. Again, he was the Secretary of the Treasury of whom Webster

said, in orotund phrase: "He smote the rock of the national resources, and abundant streams of revenue gushed forth. He touched the dead corpse of Public Credit, and it sprung upon its feet." Hence Hamilton wrote on finance, from which, by an easy step, he turned to themes affecting political economy. Of the large mass of his writings, the most significant parts are, first and foremost, his Publius letters in "The Federalist"; besides these, his plan for a constitution; speeches in the Federal and the New York convention; letters, report, and opinion on a national banking system; draft of Washington's Farewell Address; an examination of Jefferson's Inaugural. Under the loose fashions of the time we may, perhaps, partially excuse his Farewell Address draft, or his "draft of a speech delivered by the Hon. William Smith, of South Carolina, on Commercial Relations"; for Samuel Adams would, on occasion, write a speech for John Hancock to deliver. Not excusable, however, were his base immoralities and his contemptible defence thereof. We hardly pardon, furthermore, the undertone of diplomatic insincerity so often heard beneath his words. In his day he was deemed a brilliant orator, an effective pleader in written words, and a constitutional statesman of the highest rank. The United States of to-day is largely the result of the work of Hamilton, whom Guizot ranked "among the men who have best known the vital principles and fundamental conditions of a government worthy of its name and mission," whom Talleyrand declared unequalled among contemporary statesmen," and who,

in the opinion of his latest editor, "takes his place with Turgot, Pitt, and Adam Smith as one of the leading minds of that epoch, in departments of thought which have been of unequalled importance to the interest of civilized mankind." But his rank as an author depends finally upon his contributions to "The Federalist"—a weighty and potent book, which, however, like Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations," scarcely belongs within the borderline of true literature.

George Washington, whose firmness, discretion, and conservative patriotism put the United States forever in his debt—both as regards his soldiery and his statesmanship—was a writer who made some small mark upon incipient American literature, and who at any rate, may be mentioned among the political writers of his time. Without collegiate education, and never paying special attention to the art of style, he wrote plainly and clearly, in a somewhat individual way. Twelve large volumes trimly include his once scattered and desultory manuscripts, chiefly letters and documents. In 1754 was printed, at Williamsburg, Virginia—then possessing the only printing press in the colony—Washington's journal of an expedition to the Ohio River. After this he wrote but when he must, and his letters, messages, and addresses simply say what they have to say, and then stop. The art of correspondence was brought to a state of some excellence in the latter half of the eighteenth century; and Washington's reputation as a letter-writer (of course aided by his official position) was such that he was

George Washington, 1732–1799.

obliged to make a list of spurious letters which had been credited to his pen. His chief writing, however, was that famous Farewell Address offered to his countrymen in 1796, often reprinted in a little volume or with other political matter. This address, like Washington's Inaugural in 1789, was written in Johnsonian English, with long balanced sentences and many Latin derivatives. Upon it the writer spent much pains, and he was certainly assisted by several hands in its preparation; but it so accords with his character and with his known literary style that his credit for it need not be diminished in essentials. All his great work as general and statesman —aided or shown by his minor work with the pen— proves him sincere in his piety and unswerving in his patriotism. It was much for the country, and something for literature in the days of the powerful influence of French infidelity, to be governed by a man who felt that "no people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States"; that "the propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has ordained"; and that "the foundations of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality." *

John Adams, cousin of Samuel, vice-president under Washington, and second president of the United States, took his share in the pen-campaigns of his time. Like his son, John Quincy, he was an

* Inaugural Address, 1789.

inveterate diarist, from 1755 to 1785, and his records of some important transactions are not only valuable as history but picturesque in language. In his correspondence, too, he preserved many perishable pictures; here, for instance, is his historical description of the Massachusetts court, when the case of the Writs of Assistance was brought before it, a description that, by anticipation, suggests Macaulay: John Adams, 1735–1826.

> The scene is the Council-chamber in the old Town-house in Boston. The date is in the month of February, 1761. The Council-chamber was as respectable an apartment as the House of Commons or the House of Lords in Great Britain, in proportion, or that in the State-house, in Philadelphia, in which the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776. In this chamber, round a great fire, were seated five judges, with Lieutenant-governor Hutchinson at their head as chief-justice, all arrayed in their new, fresh, rich robes of scarlet English broad-cloth, in their large cambric bands and immense judicial wigs. In this chamber were seated, at a long table, all the barristers-at-law of Boston, and of the neighboring county of Middlesex, in gowns, bands, and tie-wigs. They were not seated on ivory chairs, but their dress was more solemn and more pompous than that of the Roman Senate when the Gauls broke in upon them. Two portraits, at more than full length, of King Charles the Second and King James the Second, in splendid gold frames, were hung up on the most conspicuous sides of the apartment.*

Adams could turn a phrase neatly enough, and there was matter as well as manner in his phrases.

* "J. Adams' Works," x., 244; also quoted in Lodge's "History of the English Colonies in America," p. 418.

To Jonathan Sewall, in 1774, he said: "The die was now cast; I had passed the Rubicon. Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish with my country, was my unalterable determination." Webster, years later, so aptly used this expression as to make it his own, in the popular mind. Adams may also claim some small renown as a prophet, if we make an easy transfer from the second of July (when the resolution to make the Declaration of Independence was adopted) to the fourth, when the Declaration was pronounced: "The second day of July, 1776, will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forevermore."

This was in a letter to Mrs. Adams, written from Philadelphia, July 3, 1776. Adams must write, but he had no literary end in view, and spent as much honest care upon a home letter as upon a state document or a newspaper article to stir the patriots. Therefore, though Adams, in Jefferson's opinion, was the best debater in Congress between 1774 and 1776; and though he wrote a Defence of the American Constitution, a History of the Dispute with America, an Essay on Canon and Feudal Law, etc.; his renown as a book-maker, or master of English, is now less than that of his rival and friend, Jefferson, who died on the same day with Adams, July 4, 1826.

The early presidents of the United States, unlike some of the later ones, were men of good blood, good education, and good abilities, who wrote because they must, and who sometimes diverged into the path of pure literature. For this reason, and this only, to illustrate the superior culture of the nation's first leaders, as bearing upon the development of its literature, their names are considered here. Thus the second president of the Adams name, John Quincy Adams, "the old man eloquent," could turn off verses of the quality of the sentimental poem printed below,* or of this:

John Quincy Adams, 1767–1848.

* TO A BEREAVED MOTHER.

Sure to the mansions of the blessed
When infant innocence ascends,
Some angel, brighter than the rest,
The spotless spirit's flight attends.
On wings of ecstasy they rise,
Beyond where worlds material roll,
Till some fair sister of the skies
Receives the unpolluted soul.
That inextinguishable beam,
With dust united at our birth,
Sheds a more dim, discolored gleam
The more it lingers upon earth.

But when the Lord of mortal breath
Decrees his bounty to resume,
And points the silent shaft of death
Which speeds an infant to the tomb,
No passion fierce, nor low desire
Has quenched the radiance of the flame;
Back to its God the living fire
Reverts, unclouded as it came.
Fond mourner, be that solace thine!
Let Hope her healing charm impart,
And soothe, with melodies divine,
The anguish of a mother's heart.

Oh, think! the darlings of thy love,
Divested of this earthly clod,

This hand, to tyrants ever sworn the foe,
For freedom only deals the deadly blow,
Then sheathes in calm repose the vengeful blade,
For gentle peace in freedom's hallowed shade.

This quatrain was written when the author was seventy-five; in his earlier years, besides his poems, he had published a two-volume treatise on rhetoric (of which subject he had been professor at Harvard); a letter On the Bible and its Teachings (posthumously published); many biographical addresses and other minor productions; and a minutely faithful diary, worthy of the Adams name, and surpassing in length (twelve octavo volumes), though certainly not in readableness, those of Pepys and Samuel Sewall. He showed (in his lectures on Shakespeare and elsewhere) fair critical ability, of the expository rather than the analytic kind; and in his long humorous poem called The Wants of Man—

What first I want is daily bread
And canvas-backs and wine, etc.

he anticipated Oliver Wendell Holmes' poem Contentment, which is virtually a copy of its prototype:

Little I ask; my wants are few;
I only wish a hut of stone,
A *very plain* brown stone will do, etc.

Amid unnumbered saints, above,
Bask in the bosom of their God.
O'er thee, with looks of love, they bend;
For thee the Lord of life implore;
And oft from sainted bliss descend
Thy wounded spirit to restore.
Then dry, henceforth, the bitter tear;
Their part and thine inverted see:
Thou wert their guardian angel here,
They guardian angels now to thee!

John Quincy Adams, like Washington, John Adams, Jefferson, and Madison, was a man of culture, which occasionally clothed itself in literary garb. With his successor, Andrew Jackson, the backwoods element appeared for the first time in the White House.

The national work of Fisher Ames, Thomas Paine, Albert Gallatin, John Marshall, and Joseph Story was less prominent than that of the men whose names have last been considered, and less important as indicating the intellectual bent of the United States in its early constitutional period. Ames was the chief spokesman of the New England Federalists before their decadence, and in his day his speeches were highly esteemed. His literary style is quiet, and evidently elaborated with much care. Ames had gloomy forebodings concerning the spread of French, or Jeffersonian, democracy in America; but his intensest feelings were uttered in plain and intentionally repressed language. When, in 1796, in his greatest speech, he urged the adoption of the treaty with England, he said: "Sinking, as I am, under the sense of weakness, I imagined the very desire of speaking was extinguished by the persuasion that I had nothing to say. Yet, when I come to the moment of deciding the vote, I start back with dread from the edge of the pit into which we are plunging. In my view, even the minutes I have spent in expostulation have their value, because they protract the crisis and the short period in which alone we may resolve to escape it. . . . If the vote shall pass to reject, and a spirit should rise, as

Fisher Ames, 1758–1808.

it will, with the public disorders, to make confusion worse confounded, even I, slender and almost broken as my hold upon life is, may outlive the government and constitution of my country." Thus, with half-suppressed force, all the greater for intellectual restraint, Ames pleaded for the Federalism that was first triumphant, then crushed, and after his death practically victorious, even under Democratic administrations. Ames always believed that "to be the favorite of an ignorant multitude a man must descend to their level"; and, refusing so to do, he lost some contemporary popularity, but checked certain dangerous tendencies. For literature, certainly, it was well that many leaders of thought should refuse to cater for an unenlightened popular applause.

The Swiss Gallatin, Secretary of the Treasury under Jefferson and Madison, followed Hamilton in writing solidly on financial themes. Chief-Justice John Marshall, the biographer of Washington, by his carefully-written decisions strengthened and illuminated the Constitution, further expounded in the Commentaries of Judge Joseph Story. Though Marshall was dry and Story prolix, in learning and in character they were the peers of Chief-Justice John Jay and of Chancellor James Kent, the author of the well-known "Commentaries on Law." These eminent leaders of the American bench and bar showed, in their lives and books, that gracious culture upon which American literature must be founded; indeed, one of them, Story, began his career as a sentimental poet. A different mind gov-

Albert Gallatin, 1761–1849.

John Marshall, 1755–1835.

Joseph Story, 1779–1845.

erned the luckless Thomas Paine, whose rough but vigorous "Common Sense" pamphlet and "Crisis" periodical papers had strengthened colonial spirit in the Revolution, and whose "Rights of Man" (1792, in defence of the principles of the French Revolution) once made him an idol in France. These books are now forgotten and unread, and his deistic "Age of Reason" is popular only with the lower classes, unable to perceive its cheap and unscholarly critical method and its vulgar temper.

Thomas Paine, 1737–1809.

The later oratory of the United States was really of higher literary ability than the earlier, though it was, as a rule, less picturesque and less startling in its immediate results. What it lacked in spontaneity it made up in care of composition; the printed page often followed the author's manuscript, and was corrected by his own hand.

Twelve later American orators stand out from the great body of those who have been able to make a fluent speech. They are John Randolph, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, John Caldwell Calhoun, Rufus Choate, Edward Everett, Robert Charles Winthrop, William Henry Seward, William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Charles Sumner, and Abraham Lincoln. Of these, Randolph, Clay, and Calhoun were from the Southern States; Lincoln, though born in Kentucky, was really a Northern man. Choate was best known as a pleader at the bar, and Everett was most renowned on the lecture platform; the others were politicians,—indeed

Choate sat in the Senate, and Everett was a candidate for vice-president in 1860. Some of the twelve were Democrats, others Whigs, others moderate Republicans, others intense Abolitionists, others conservatively inclined, acting now with one party, now with another. In style this list includes such different orators as the classic Everett and the violent Randolph; the stately Webster and the homely Lincoln; the diplomatic Seward and the dictatorial Sumner; the cold Winthrop and the impassioned Phillips. The combined achievements of the twelve (only one of whom was living in 1885) are a credit to American literature, even when the large element of the perishable is eliminated from their speeches.

The figure of the first-named orator, John Randolph of Roanoke, was certainly sufficiently picturesque to attract attention, though, like most picturesque figures in the field of intellectual labor, he is more talked of than known. Thin, angular, and awkward in person, yellow-faced, shrill and sometimes frantic in voice, burned by an intense self-consciousness, and moved by an ambition that knew no bounds, Randolph was well fitted by nature to make a stir in his lifetime, and to leave no enduring reputation after death. His severities and eccentricities are remembered, his political acts forgotten. Without wife and children, bitter in temper, miserly in money matters, a Virginia patrician in his pride of name, keenly alive to his failures and shortcomings, at length the slave of intemperance, and all his life on the border of insanity, nothing

John Randolph, 1773–1833.

seemed lacking to make Randolph's life miserable, as indeed it justly was. But not all the misfortunes that at length closed around him were due to his own faults, and sometimes, like a gleam of sunshine through black clouds, appeared the signs of an affectionate and honest nature.

However wretched was Randolph the man, the renown of Randolph the orator was in his lifetime high. His unquestioned courage, the cutting force of his sarcastic words,, the malediction of his thin outstretched finger, made Congress listen when he spoke, and crowded the Virginia hustings wherever he appeared. The spell of his misfortunes quickened the interest in his words. "Had he been an Italian he would have passed for one possessed of the evil eye, one who brought destruction on all he loved, and every peasant would have secretly made the sign of the cross on meeting him." But whether admired or denounced, loved or hated, he was heard, and often feared, by foe and friend alike. A life-long Democrat and extreme States-rights advocate, he carried on the battle begun by Patrick Henry, prepared the way for Calhoun, and in some ways restricted the growing spirit of consolidation. Opposed to slavery on principle, he adhered to it in practice, and his sole work of any permanence was in turning the once-universal States-rights idea to the service of the "institution" of the South. In this work he helped by public invective, satire, or rambling disquisition, not by the long, patient, logically illogical methods of Calhoun. His speeches were full of gunpowder and red fire, which, once

burned, left little but black spots behind them. But readers still remember how he would, with every detail of dramatic action, attack an obstructive Congressman with such an effective piece of rhetoric as this :

MR. SPEAKER,—In the Netherlands a man of small capacity, with bits of wood and leather, will in a few moments construct a toy that, with the pressure of the finger and the thumb, will cry "cuckoo! cuckoo!" With less of ingenuity and inferior materials the people of Ohio have made a toy that will, without much pressure, cry "Previous question, Mr. Speaker! Previous question, Mr. Speaker!"

Jests however bitter, or repartees however crushing, will not long support an orator's renown. Not many of Randolph's long speeches were consecutive or logical, but once in a while he could speak as in that address which his latest biographer calls his ablest. The date was January, 31, 1824, and the theme was internal improvements—then favored by the Whigs and Jeffersonian Democrats, and opposed by the extreme State-rights men. Narrow and misguided as the speech was, it yet prophesied in plain language the Nullification of 1832, the Civil War of 1861–5, the future defence of slavery behind State-rights, and the means finally taken for its overthrow :

This government cannot go on one day without a mutual understanding and deference between the State and General governments. This Government is the breath of the nostrils of the States. Gentlemen may say what they please of the preamble to the Constitution ; but this Constitution is not the work of the amalgamated population of the then existing confederacy, but the offspring

of the States; and however high we may carry our heads and strut and fret our hour, "dressed in a little brief authority," it is in the power of the States to extinguish this government at a blow. They have only to refuse to send members to the other branch of the Legislature, or to appoint electors of President and Vice-President, and the thing is done.

Randolph went on to declare contemptuously that the Government, as a government for the management of the internal concerns of this country, was one of the worst that could be conceived, and that he had "no hesitation in saying that the liberties of the colonies were safer in the custody of the British Parliament than they will be in any portion of this country, if all the powers of the States as well as of the General Government are devolved on this House." No statesman of eminence, of either party, ever made such a claim as he here attacked, but Randolph was not a man to stop when he wished to make a sensation.

On the slavery qestion, which was to be fought over for forty years more, he spoke thus:

There is one other power which may be exercised in case the power now contended for be conceded, to which I ask the attention of every gentleman who happens to stand in the same unfortunate predicament with myself, —of every man who has the misfortune to be and to have been born a slaveholder. If Congress possess the power to do what is proposed by this bill, they may not only enact a sedition law,—for there is precedent,—but they may emancipate every slave in the United States, and with stronger color of reason than they can exercise [*sic*] the power now contended for. And where will they find the power? They may follow the example of the gentle-

men who have preceded me, and hook the power on to the first loop they find in the Constitution. They might take the preamble, perhaps the war-making power; or they might take a greater sweep, and say, with some gentlemen, that it is not to be found in this or that of the granted powers, but results from all of them, which is not only a dangerous but the most dangerous doctrine. Is it not demonstrable that slave labor is the dearest in the world, and that the existence of a large body of slaves is a source of danger? Suppose we are at war with a foreign power, and freedom should be offered them by Congress as an inducement to them to take a part in it; or suppose the country not at war, at every turn of this Federal machine, at every successive census, that interest will find itself governed by another and increasing power, which is bound to it neither by any common tie of interest or feeling. And if ever the time shall arrive, as assuredly it has arrived elsewhere, and in all probability may arrive here, that a coalition of knavery and fanaticism shall for any purpose be got up on this floor, I ask gentlemen who stand in the same predicament as I do to look well to what they are now doing, to the colossal power with which they are now arming this government. . . . Let them look forward to the time when such a question shall arise, and tremble with me at the thought that that question is to be decided by a majority of the votes of this House, of whom not one possesses the slightest tie of common interest or of common feeling with us.

This is quite forcible English; and, making all necessary allowances for its narrow partisanship, it was certainly a keen prophecy. Randolph clearly saw, in 1824, that the North must grow faster than the South, and that slavery would sooner or later go to the wall. He foresaw, too, that slavery might be

partially abolished as a war measure (which was done in 1863), and that a Northern majority in Congress might practically force its abolition, as actually occurred when, in the process of reconstruction, States were required to adopt the emancipation amendments to the Constitution as a condition of their return to the Union.

This speech, called by Henry Adams * Randolph's masterpiece, is also said by Mr. Adams to have been "inspired by hatred of Clay." Henry Clay, the idol of the Whigs for many years, was a far more prominent figure in national politics than was Randolph, who was in his very nature sectional and local. The bloodless duel which Clay and Randolph fought in 1826 has long been forgotten; in their struggle for political fame Clay was easily the victor. It is doubtful whether the history of American politics can show the record of a greater personal popularity than was enjoyed by Clay. A Virginian by birth, a Kentuckian by residence, a youthful admirer of Jefferson, a United States Senator at thirty years of age, Clay first reached national prominence as an advocate of the policy of internal improvements at national expense and of the protective tariff, a policy of course distasteful to the extreme States'-rights men. His transition from the Democratic party to the Whig was easily accomplished, and for the latter and longer part of his life he was, with the exception of Daniel Webster, the most prominent Whig in the country. Like Webster, he was an unsuccessful

Henry Clay, 1777–1852.

* "Life of Randolph," p. 278.

presidential aspirant, though thrice his party's candidate, and once almost elected (in 1844). Opposed to slavery, on principle, he sought its gradual extinction without extreme measures, and caused the adoption of the "Missouri Compromise," making all United States territorial lands north of 36° 30′ free from slavery. As Speaker of the House of Representatives, Secretary of State (under J. Q. Adams), Senator, and publicist, he spent his lifetime in promoting conservative Whig principles. In advocating these principles he won his renown as an orator, which during his lifetime was higher than now. Less solid and less able than Webster's, his speeches were more attractive to hearers of average ability, and his personal traits were so winsome that no American, probably, ever had so large, so enthusiastic, and even so affectionate a following. His friend and follower, Horace Greeley—himself, in later years, an unsuccessful presidential candidate,—speaks of the "magic of his conversation and manners," and calls him "an admirable orator." Without this personal magic, much of the charm of his oratory is lost upon the printed page, and Clay, however honest, seems rather the rhetorician, bent upon immediate effect, than the sterling orator.

On the twenty-second of July, 1850, Clay stood in his place in the United States Senate, an old man of seventy-three, and pleaded with youthful vigor for the compromise measures of 1850—the advocacy of which, in the famous "Seventh of March Speech," cost Webster half his Northern friends. The speech shows Clay as he was—earnest, forcible, sure that he

was right, bound to carry his point, but somewhat superficial and declamatory. Hear him, and note his good and bad qualities as an orator :

I am no alarmist ; nor, I thank God, at the advanced age at which His Providence has been pleased to allow me to reach [*sic*], am I very easily alarmed by any human event ; but I totally misread the signs of the times, if there be that state of profound peace and quiet, that absence of all just cause of apprehension of future danger to this confederacy, which appears to be entertained by some other Senators. Mr. President, all the tendencies of the times, I lament to say, are toward disquietude, if not more fatal consequences. . . . These are not only great and leading causes of just apprehension as respects the future, but all the minor circumstances of the day intimate danger ahead, whatever may be its final issue and consequence. Mr. President, I will not dwell upon other concomitant causes, all having the same tendency, and all well calculated to awaken, to arouse us—if, as I hope the fact is, we are all of us sincerely desirous of preserving this Union,—to rouse us to dangers which really exist, without underrating them upon the one hand, or magnifying them upon the other. . . . The public mind and the public heart are becoming familiarized with that most dangerous and fatal of all events—the disunion of the States. People begin to contend that this is not so bad a thing as they had supposed. Like the progress in all human affairs, as we approach danger it disappears, it diminishes in our conception, and we no longer regard it with that awful apprehension of consequences that we did before we came into contact with it. . . . Mr. President, what is an individual man? An atom, almost invisible without a magnifying glass, a mere speck upon the surface of the immense universe ; not a second in time, compared to immeasurable, never-beginning, and never-ending eternity ; a drop of water in the great deep, which

evaporates and is borne off by the winds: a grain of sand, which is soon gathered to the dust from whence it sprang. Shall a being so small, so petty, so fleeting, so evanescent, oppose itself to the onward march of a great nation, which is to subsist for ages and ages to come; oppose itself to that long line of posterity which, issuing from our loins, will endure during the existence of the world? Forbid it, God. Let us look to our country and our cause, elevate ourselves to the dignity of pure and disinterested patriots, and save our country from all impending dangers.

Then, after some utterances of *never, never*, etc., Mr. Clay went on to ask, if nothing be done toward tranquillity, whether all the monarchs of the Old World would not "pronounce our glorious Republic a disgraceful failure"; and next proceeded to make this touching appeal, worthy of Chadband himself:

And, sir, when you come into the bosom of your family, when you come to converse with the partner of your fortunes, of your happiness, and of your sorrows, and, when in the midst of the common offspring of both of you, she asks you: "Is there any danger of civil war? Is there any danger of the torch being applied to any portion of the country? Have you settled the questions which you have been so long discussing and deliberating upon at Washington? Is all peace and all quiet?" what response, Mr. President, can you make to that wife of your choice and those children with whom you have been blessed by God? Will you go home and leave all in disorder and confusion—all unsettled—all open?

Abler and loftier were Mr. Clay's closing words:

If Kentucky to-morrow unfurls the banner of resistance unjustly, I never will fight under that banner. I owe a paramount allegiance to the whole Union—a subordinate

one to my own State. When my State is right—when it has a cause for resistance—when tyranny, and wrong, and oppression insufferable arise, I will then share her fortunes; but if she summons me to the battle-field, or to support her in any cause which is unjust against the Union, never, *never* will I engage with her in such cause.

A printed speech cannot reproduce the original effect; and it is hard to judge justly of an orator's fame by means of extracts like these. But the careful student of Clay's speeches must come to the conclusion to which these selections lead: that Clay was an honest, patriotic, and able politician, but not a great orator. His speeches are too often tawdry and inelegant; their cheap finery makes their bad English all the more apparent. What is worse, the underlying thought is too often neither profound nor valuable. If we contrast Clay's best speeches with those of other Whig leaders of the century, such as Webster in America or (*mutatis mutandis*) Gladstone in England, their poverty becomes painfully apparent.

Upon the exterior of the Sanders Theatre of Harvard University—the oratorical centre of the oldest American college—are seven sculptured heads of the greatest orators of the world, who, according to this selection, are Demosthenes the Greek, Cicero the Roman, St. Chrysostom the Syrian, Bossuet the Frenchman, Chatham and Burke the Englishmen, and Daniel Webster the American. The choice is a fit one. Whatever the claims of other leading American orators, Webster, all in all, is their chief. So he was regarded during his

Daniel Webster, 1782–1852.

lifetime, and the years since his death have not diminished his renown. Indeed, now that Webster's intense ambitions and bitter disappointments have long been quenched in ashes, the solidity of his renown as an orator has become more apparent.

Webster was a New Hampshire lad of the sturdy New England stock, who went in due course to Dartmouth College, made the most of his advantages, and became a notable figure, even in his student days. The defects of an imperfect preparation for college he partially repaired by his industry while an undergraduate. In those subjects which he liked, he was singularly well-equipped; and though his early achievements were somewhat irregular, and, like so many men of genius, he neglected those branches for which he had small taste, he was really a young man of high promise before his twentieth year. His instructors recognized his abilities, which they deemed higher than those of any other student they had ever taught; and in the year 1800, when Webster was a Junior in college, and but eighteen years of age, he was requested by the townspeople of Hanover to deliver an oration on the Fourth of July.

Webster's Life-Work.

In this Fourth of July speech the young Webster fairly outlined what was to be his life-work. He lauded the makers of the new nation, spoke of its promise, predicted its great future, urged devotion to the idea of one country, and declared the Constitution to be the precious pledge of the perpetuity of the Union, a thing ever to be sought and maintained. Webster, in the ensuing half cen-

tury of his life, was not an ardent Abolitionist, like Sumner, nor a zealous defender of slavery and States' rights, like Calhoun. He failed to win the coveted prize of the Presidency, nor was his name connected with many potent Congressional measures. At one time he bent toward the selfish slave-oligarchy of the South, and at another he was subservient to the money-kings of State Street, Boston. But he was first, last, and always the defender of the Union, at a time when constitutional consolidation was not yet complete, and when the principles of nullification and secession had begun their work. That the United States maintained its union; that the final settlement of the slavery question was so long postponed by conservative measures, while the power of the anti-slavery North steadily grew; and that the civil war of 1861–5 (years after Webster's death) resulted in a Union victory, was due to the long, patient work of Daniel Webster more than to that of any other American statesman.

The literary historian need not recount Webster's early successes at the bar; his triumph in winning the "Dartmouth College Case" (involving the question of legislative interference with chartered rights) before the Supreme Court; his services as member of the House of Representatives, senator, and Secretary of State; and his disappointments in the Whig presidential nominating conventions, which set him aside for "available" military men not possessing a tithe of his ability. He held high offices, and was for years the most commanding figure in the Senate of the United States; he was twice at the head of the

Cabinet, and he was in the hearts of his countrymen "my brave senator,"—as Emerson wrote to Carlyle in 1839. Thousands of Americans, like young Emerson, followed his "great forehead from court-house to senate-chamber, from caucus to street." All this was more than the fleeting popular tribute paid to Clay; it was the recognition of an intellect of the first order. The more thoughtful knew, indeed,—to borrow Emerson's phrase once more,—that he was "no saint," but "a prodigal"; yet they recognized that behind that massive figure, that commanding port, those piercing eyes, there dwelt a mind which well deserved its fame. Webster is a speech-maker whose high renown has survived his popularity in life, his trimming and time-serving traits, his occasional willingness to speak on subjects of which he was profoundly ignorant, and his personal sins. His enduring greatness as an orator is manifest now to him who reads his noble volumes of speeches.

Webster's method.

Webster's manner was deliberately adopted,—indeed, it was the only manner consistent with his nature and tastes. It was orotund, imposing, profound, weighty, sometimes heavy. But in this manner he had no superior among the orators of his century. Words which from a feeble man would have seemed platitudes, in his mouth, and in his carefully-pondered phrase, became familiar quotations, watchwords of liberty, rallying cries of party. "Let our object be our country, our whole country, and nothing but our country,"—uttered by him in 1825, in his address at the laying of the corner-stone of Bunker-Hill Monument, Charlestown,—became

familiar from east to west. This triplicate form was a favorite with Webster, and reappears in some of his other famous dicta: "The people's government, made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people"; "One country, one constitution, one destiny"; "I was born an American; I live an American; I die an American." If but a narrow space separates these words from the commonplace, the chasm of separation is very deep; their success was no accident. Webster's capacious memory saved up allusions which he might need in future, coined phrases, and polished and elaborated them until the moment of utterance, when he deserved the success he almost always won. There is sometimes in his speeches an apparent lack of spontaneity, and ready wit was not to be looked for in his words. His English style was not that of Johnson, nor yet that of Gladstone, but belongs between the two. It cannot be called a Latinized style, through and through, yet Latin derivatives bore an important part in securing its sonorousness, and resonance, and power. The antithesis, too, Webster used freely, but never just as it was used by the orators or the "classic poets" of the eighteenth century in England, or (more briefly but more constantly) by Macaulay in Webster's own day. He was certainly, as one of his critics claims, "a master of English style"; and, indeed, his strength and his influence are shown in the fact that an adjective has been coined from his name, and is in familiar use. Just as we say "Addisonian," "Johnsonian," "Wordsworthian," "Emersonian," we say "Websterian," and our

meaning is everywhere understood. It is hard to dissever the thought of the man himself from the study of his writings; but *Websterian*, even in literature, denotes the possession of qualities solid, substantial, imposing.

The greatest speeches delivered by Daniel Webster—they are too familiar to need citation—were those on the Dartmouth College Case (United States Supreme Court, March 10, 1818); on the character of the first settlers of New England (Plymouth, Massachusetts, December 22, 1820); at the laying of the corner-stone of Bunker-Hill Monument (Charlestown, Massachusetts, June 17, 1825); at the completion of the same (June 17, 1843); on the characters of Presidents Adams and Jefferson (commemorative exercises in Faneuil Hall, Boston, August 2, 1826); on States' rights *versus* the nation (in reply to Senator Hayne of South Carolina, January 26 and 27, 1830); on the character of Washington (February 22, 1832); on Jackson's veto of the National Bank Bill (July 11, 1832); on the Plymouth Pilgrims (at New York, December 22, 1843); on the religious instruction of the young (in the Girard will case, Supreme Court, February 20, 1844); and on "The Constitution and the Union" (the famous "seventh of March" compromise speech, 1850). To these should be added one of the most celebrated pleas in an American criminal case—Webster's arraignment of the accused in the White murder trial at Salem, Massachusetts. These are but a small part of Webster's legal, political, and commemorative speeches; but one cannot read them through with-

out assigning to their writer the first place in the American forum. He was, as has been said, sometimes grandiose, pompous, fonder of "great swelling words" than of common-sense; but his sincerity, gravity, massiveness, and strength, set forth with the aid of patient but hidden art, as a rule far outweigh the orator's manifest faults, and give him a place of his own. We need not declare Webster an American Burke or Chatham; it is enough to call him, for the world, Webster.

The chief opponent of Webster in the Senate of the United States, was John Caldwell Calhoun, of South Carolina. Webster was not an extremist; he represented, to be sure, the Whig ideas of a strong central government, protection to American industries, and a temperate restraint of the growth of slavery; but he did not push any Whig or sectional theory to an extreme point. Calhoun, on the other hand, was extreme in almost all political theories and in many public acts. Webster's unswerving devotion, in public life, was to the nation, Calhoun's to the single State of South Carolina. Webster loved the whole Union, Calhoun cared but for his own section. Webster was willing to make sacrifices for the benefit of the whole country, Calhoun would have sacrificed the rights of distant States for the good of the South. Yet Calhoun, from his mistaken point of view, was as loyal to the idea of Right as was Webster; his private character was higher, and his public career less open to charges of selfish ambition. In ability he was undoubtedly inferior to the great Massachusetts statesman, but

John Caldwell Calhoun, 1782–1850.

among all the politicians and orators of the Southern States he was easily the leader. In him was incarnated the complete theory of States' rights,—a theory originally held without reference to local aims and circumstances, but finally turned by Randolph and Calhoun to the implicit service of negro slavery. It was Calhoun's misfortune that he fought his life-fight for an institution in its nature temporary, alien to the spirit of modern civilization, justice, and Christianity, and doomed both by the race-constituents and the geographical contour of the United States. He battled bravely, honorably, and long in a losing cause, and though he died at a moment when victory seemed achieved—with Webster himself as an ally, —the apparent triumph of States'-rights Democracy was fleeting. Upon the United States of to-day the influence of Calhoun is almost *nil*, while the Websterian idea never was stronger. The progress of events has banished the very shade of the great Nullifier, and outside his own State few read his once-famous speeches, even for curiosity's sake.

Calhoun as an orator.

But their merits are apparent at a glance. In the first place, candor, courage, and loyalty to an ideal appear in almost every line, and these form the soul of a body of style which displays many rhetorical beauties. Calhoun was more than conservative, he was reactionary; but in his reactionary speeches, looking backward as they did toward mere colonialism, he defended colonialism in a masterly way. To him the republic was virtually no republic at all, merely the temporary agent of the sovereign States, retaining its powers so long as it

did the work of the single States employing it. He served his own State as Webster did the nation, and gave her whatever powers of logic or eloquence he possessed. "The Constitution has admitted the jurisdiction of the United States within the limits of the several States only so far as the delegated powers authorize; beyond that they [the "forcing-acts" of 1832] are intruders, and may rightfully be expelled; and that they have been efficiently expelled by the legislation of the State through her civil process, as has been acknowledged on all sides in the debate, is only a confirmation of the truth of the doctrine for which the majority in Carolina have contended." Thus he spoke in the Senate in 1833, in defence of South Carolina's "nullification" of United States laws displeasing to her. What could be clearer, what more neatly put? "The very point at issue between the two parties there, is, whether nullification is a peaceful and an efficient remedy against an unconstitutional act of the General Government. . . . We were not children, to act by halves. Yet for acting thus efficiently the State is denounced, and this bill reported, to overrule, by military force, the civil tribunal and civil process of the State! . . . The State stands pledged to resist no process of the [supreme] court. Why, then, confer on the President the extensive and unlimited powers provided in this bill? Why authorize him to use military force to arrest the civil process of the State? But one answer can be given: That, in a contest between the State and the General Government, if the resistance be limited on both sides to the civil process, the State,

by its inherent sovereignty, standing upon its reserved powers, will prove too powerful in such a controversy, and must triumph over the Federal Government, sustained by its delegated and limited authority; and in this answer we have an acknowledgement of the truth of those great principles for which the State has so firmly and nobly contended." This battle for "inherent sovereignty" Calhoun fought to the end of his life; nullification was crushed by President Jackson in 1832, and secession by the Northern armies in the war of 1861–5; the theory of *extreme* States' rights and a dissoluble Union has been slain by the sword; but even now we cannot spare our applause for the speaker's eloquent and logically consistent words, as they echo through half a century from that dim period which to the American is sufficiently described by the words "before the war":

Calhoun's life-argument.

Notwithstanding all that has been said, I may say that neither the Senator from Delaware [Mr. Clayton], nor any other who has spoken on the same side, has directly and fairly met the great question at issue: Is this a Federal Union? a union of States, as distinct from that of individuals? Is the sovereignty in the several States, or in the American people in the aggregate? The very language which we are compelled to use when speaking of our political institutions, affords proof conclusive as to its real character. The terms union, federal, united, all imply a combination of sovereignties, a confederation of States. They never apply to an association of individuals. Who ever heard of the United State of New York, of Massachusetts, or Virginia? Who ever heard the term federal or union applied to the aggregation of individuals into one community? Nor is the other

point less clear—that the sovereignty is in the several States, and that our system is a union of twenty-four sovereign powers, under a constitutional compact, and not of a divided sovereignty between the States severally and the United States. In spite of all that has been said, I maintain that sovereignty is in its nature indivisible. It is the supreme power in a State, and we might just as well speak of half a square, or half a triangle, as of half a sovereignty. It is a gross error to confound the *exercise* of sovereign powers with *sovereignty* itself, or the *delegation* of such powers with the *surrender* of them. A sovereign may delegate his powers to be exercised by as many agents as he may think proper, under such conditions and with such limitations as he may impose; but to surrender any portion of his sovereignty to another is to annihilate the whole. The Senator from Delaware calls this metaphysical reasoning, which he says he cannot comprehend. If by metaphysics he means that scholastic refinement which makes distinctions without difference, no one can hold it in more utter contempt than I do; but if, on the contrary, he means the power of analysis and combination —that power which reduces the most complex idea into its elements, which traces causes to their first principle, and, by the power of generalization and combination, unites the whole in one harmonious system,—then, so far from deserving contempt, it is the highest attribute of the human mind. It is the power which raises man above the brute—which distinguishes his faculties from mere sagacity, which he holds in common with inferior animals. It is this power which has raised the astronomer from being a mere gazer at the stars to the high intellectual eminence of a Newton or a Laplace, and astronomy itself from a mere observation of insulated facts into that noble science which displays to our admiration the system of the universe. And shall this high power of the mind, which has effected such wonders when directed to the laws which control the material world, be forever prohibited, under a

senseless cry of metaphysics, from being applied to the high purposes of political science and legislation? I hold them to be subject to laws as fixed as matter itself, and to be as fit a subject for the application of the highest intellectual power. Denunciation may, indeed, fall upon the philosophical inquirer into these first principles, as it did upon Galileo and Bacon, when they first unfolded the great discoveries which have immortalized their names; but the time will come when truth will prevail in spite of prejudice and denunciation, and when politics will be considered as much a science as astronomy and chemistry.

Thus Calhoun fought in defence of a theory inconsistent with any idea of a stable or permanent government. No one pretends that the States gave up *all* their powers to the general government. Again, it is an indisputable fact, verified by all history, that when a state, a combination of states, a colony, a section, a city, feels that it has the right and the might to overthrow a government, it may do so if it can, by peaceable or by warlike measures. Thus Maximus threw off the Roman yoke in Britain, thus the colonies rebelled against Britain in America. But to assert that the States of the American Union simply delegated their powers to a general agent whose acts were subject to approval or disapproval, to adoption or rejection, by a single State, was preposterous—a theory which was not consistent with the Constitution, nor with the simplest governmental act of legislation. On Calhoun's plan, the United States government had no right to levy a tax of one cent in South Carolina, unless the State sanctioned the tax. Nullification was simply this refusal; the tariffs of 1828 and 1832 being declared "null, void, and no law, nor

binding upon South Carolina." Not even a good literary form can long make interesting such arguments as Calhoun's. To him the United States *were* a confederation; he could not have said that the United States *was* a nation; and he always spelled State with a capital letter. History has passed by him and his plea, and now deems his words "null, void, and no law."

The prominence of Massachusetts in American oratory during the nineteenth century is apparent at a glance. It is to be explained by two causes: the existence in New England of the English Puritan stock, and the prevalence of the higher education. These causes, wherever or whenever existing elsewere in the United States, with the spread of intelligence and education, have produced similar, though perhaps not equal, results. Indeed, Massachusetts at the present day can show no such array of speakers as Webster, Choate, Everett, Winthrop, Phillips, and Sumner, who were contemporaries.

Rufus Choate, like Webster, was a graduate of Dartmouth; became, as did Webster, a Boston lawyer, and, having been elected a Congressman in 1832, was chosen United States Senator in 1841, to succeed Webster, when the latter was appointed Secretary of State under President Harrison. The names of Webster and Choate are affectionately associated in the college of their graduation, and in the State whose reputation they enhanced. But, though both were great orators, their abilities and successes differed widely. Webster was preëminently a statesman, Choate a lawyer;

Rufus Choate, 1799–1859.

Webster's triumphs were won in commemorative discourses or public debates ; Choate's, for the most part, in pleas before juries. If Webster was the first of American orators, Choate was clearly the first of American lawyers. His abilities were no less apparent in intellectual analysis of cases than in the eloquence of his pleas at the bar. It necessarily follows that the reputation of a great lawyer, like that of an eminent actor, and even more than that of other orators, must be largely traditionary. Cases fade from thought, juries and counsel disappear, and public interest wanes. Choate's power over juries, his fervid eloquence, his ability to make the driest subjects fascinating, must to a great extent be taken on the testimony of our elders. But the force and grace of his printed speeches are apparent : in particular, of his tribute to " The Eloquence of Revolutionary Periods " (Feb. 19, 1857) ; of his eulogy on Daniel Webster (before the faculty and students of Dartmouth, July 27, 1853) ; of " American Nationality " (the Boston Fourth of July oration, 1858). In these, his masterpieces, the style is too florid and sometimes intricate. The sentences are somewhat soaring and pretentious, and the manner often melodramatic. We miss the intense fire of the speaker's personality, as the illumination of his dramatic action. Choate lived in an age of sentiment, and his language is that of perpetual eulogy, unchastened by the critical spirit. But if he was influenced by his time, he also influenced it. If persuasion is the ultimate mark of rhetorical success, within the fields of his effort he seldom failed to win that success.

His ways and methods have been somewhat changed in cold and intellectual New England, though followed in other parts of the country. But enthusiasm cannot ultimately give way to cold criticism, though sentiment fade before high idealism. The spirit of Choate still wins us, if his mannerisms have lost their power to charm. And when he spoke under the deepest feeling, in the most inspiring surroundings, and after patient artistic labor, his words displayed such prose-poetry as glows in the peroration of his eulogy of Webster :

It is time that this eulogy was spoken. My heart goes back into the coffin there with him, and I would pause. I went—it is a day or two since—alone, to see again the home which he so dearly loved, the chamber where he died, the grave in which they laid him—all habited as when

> His look drew audience still as night,
> Or summer's noontide air,

till the heavens be no more. Throughout that spacious and calm scene all things to the eye showed at first unchanged. The books in the library, the portraits, the table at which he wrote, the scientific culture of the land, the course of agricultural occupation, the coming-in of harvests, fruit of the seed his own hand had scattered, the animals and implements of husbandry, the trees planted by him in lines, in copses, in orchards, by thousands, the seat under the noble elm on which he used to sit to feel the southwest wind at evening, or hear the breathings of the sea, or the not less audible music of the starry heavens, all seemed at first unchanged. The sun of a bright day, from which, however, something of the fervors of midsummer were wanting, fell temperately on them all, filled the air on all sides with the utterances of life, and gleamed on the long line of ocean. Some of those whom

on earth he loved best, still were there. The great mind still seemed to preside, the great presence to be with you; you might expect to hear again the rich and playful tones of the voice of the old hospitality. Yet a moment more, and all the scene took on the aspect of one great monument, inscribed with his name, and sacred to his memory. And such it shall be in all the future of America! The sensation of desolateness, and loneliness, and darkness, with which you see it now, will pass away; the sharp grief of love and friendship will become soothed; men will repair thither as they are wont to commemorate the great days of history; the same glance shall take in, and the same emotions shall greet and bless the Harbor of the Pilgrims, and the Tomb of Webster.

Choate's style was his own—beautiful rather in its shifting pictures than in any finished artistic whole. Infelicities abound, but when such sympathetic words as these were illuminated by his flashing eye, were given new and fuller meaning by the intonations of his voice, and were emphasized by his telling gestures, we can well believe that his audience was bound in a spell.

Edward Everett, another of the orators who made Boston, in the middle of the nineteenth century, seem almost a new Academy, possessed neither massive strength nor intense fire. He was, in truth, an academic orator; bearing many marks of similarity to John Quincy Adams. He was in early manhood a Harvard professor, was minister of the Brattle Street Church, Boston, at twenty, wrote poetry and religious tracts, prepared a Greek grammar, familiarized himself with Europe and European celebrities, edited *The North American*

Edward Everett, 1794–1865.

Review, and in 1824 won oratorical renown by a careful college address on "The Circumstances Favorable to the Progress of Literature in America." No Massachusetts orator was ever equipped for his work by an education so complete. To the knowledge acquired by study he added the fruits of official experience, as Representative in Congress, United States Senator, Minister to England, Secretary of State, Governor of Massachusetts, and President of Harvard College. For the last-named office his tastes did not fit him, but his success in political life was marked—especially in his diplomatic labors. In 1860 Everett was nominated for Vice-President of the United States, on the Constitutional Union ticket; that he failed of election was perhaps a national misfortune.

The American orator has inevitably treated such themes as have been suggested by historical anniversaries, philanthropic or political gatherings, or the death of great men. In orations on such topics the American tendency toward wholesome optimism has of course found more room for development than has the caustic temper of a Randolph of Roanoke. Mr. Everett was a pleasant, winsome speaker, whose chief error was that, too often, he only praised or expounded, when he might have added blame to his commendations and analyses. He was not a great creator, not an irresistible destroyer. But his temper was not always uncritical; his long, smooth, well-balanced sentences sometimes presented both sides of a subject; and he could, as in his defence of America against her half-informed critics, fifty years

ago, cut and sting. His most-repeated lecture, that on Washington, displayed at the best his strong yet gentle powers, his elaborate but genuine rhetorical art. In Everett was well displayed that sound conservatism upon which the nation and its literature has so confidently relied.

Everett and Lincoln at Gettysburg.

On the nineteenth day of November, 1863, was dedicated, in the presence of a large and distinguished company, the national cemetery on the battle-field of Gettysburg, the turning-point of the civil war. By a natural choice, Everett was selected to deliver the principal oration, as being the most eminent living orator in the United States. His speech was in his most felicitous style, and well represented the oratorical school to which he belonged. The language was choice, the classical allusions were apt, the modern descriptions were poetic yet just, and the spirit, though saddened, was hopeful for the future of the nation. Everett's words were those of the American orator of the middle period,—after the Revolution and the making of the nation, and before the new time of freedom from conventional rules. On the same day President Lincoln delivered his famous Gettysburg address. The contrast between these two well-known funeral orations could not have been more marked. Everett's was long, Lincoln's short; Everett's drew allusions from classic history, Lincoln's went no farther back than the record of American nationality; Everett's displayed the culture of the Boston university man and the European resident; Lincoln's was the plain speech of an unlettered native of Ken-

tucky and citizen of Illinois. The range and ultimate direction of American literature—to which both orations clearly belong—could not have been better illustrated than by their variant methods and similar results.

"Standing beneath this serene sky," began Everett, "overlooking these broad fields now reposing from the labors of the waning year, the mighty Alleghanies dimly towering before us, the graves of our brethren beneath our feet, it is with hesitation that I raise my poor voice to break the eloquent silence of God and nature. But the duty to which you have called me must be performed; grant me, I pray you, your indulgence and your sympathy." Then followed, in limpid language, an account of the Athenian rites in memory of those who had died in their country's cause; then Everett exclaimed—in words whose oratorical finish is almost unexcelled:

> Shall I, fellow-citizens, who, after an interval of twenty-three centuries, a youthful pilgrim from the world unknown to ancient Greece, have wandered over that illustrious plain, ready to put off the shoes from my feet as one that stands on holy ground,—who have gazed with respectful emotion on the mound which still protects the dust of those who rolled back the tide of Persian invasion, and rescued the land of popular liberty, of letters, and of arts, from the ruthless foe,—stand unmoved over the graves of our dear brethren, who so lately, on three of those all-important days which decide a nation's history, —days on whose issue it depended whether this august republican Union, founded by some of the wisest statesmen that ever lived, cemented with the blood of some of the purest patriots that ever died, should perish or endure,

—rolled back the tide of an invasion, not less unprovoked, not less ruthless, than that which came to plant the dark banner of Asiatic despotism and slavery on the free soil of Greece? Heaven forbid! And could I prove so insensible to every prompting of patriotic duty and affection, not only would you, fellow-citizens, gathered many of you from distant States, who have come to take part in these pious offices of gratitude—you, respected fathers, brethren, matrons, sisters, who surround me—cry out for shame; but the forms of brave and patriotic men who fill these honored graves would heave with indignation beneath the sod.

So moved on Mr. Everett's language, in narration, congratulation, patriotic appeal, and enthusiastic peroration; an elegant example of classical rhetoric, as applied to the necessities of a modern theme. That speech and that day may be deemed the bounds of the earlier period of American oratory. Our speech-makers before the war were, at their best, profound, graceful, finished, inspiring; at their worst they were empty, orotund, bombastic, uncritical, putting sound before sense, and America before the philosophy of history. At their front were several true orators, but there lagged behind a great army of Fourth-of-July speakers and members for Buncombe County. The newer rhetoricians were simply to "speak right on," without studied art or much rhetorical device. It is too soon, as yet, to compare the two schools; certainly Boston has now no such contemporaries as she could boast a generation ago. There are, however, manifest advantages in that simple method illustrated by President Lincoln's Gettysburg address, which the newer school of orators may well make a model for imitation:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Lincoln's Gettysburg address.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.*

* "I have seen the wisest statesman and most pregnant speaker of our generation,—a man of humble birth and ungainly manners, of little culture beyond what his own genius supplied—become more absolute in power than any monarch of modern times, through the reverence of his countrymen for his honesty, his wisdom, his sincerity, his faith in God and man, and the noble, humane simplicity of his character. And I remember another, whom popular respect enveloped as with a halo,—the least vulgar of men, the most austerely genial, and the most independent of opinion. Wherever he went, he never met a stranger, but everywhere neighbors and friends, proud of him as their ornament and decoration. Institutions which could bear and breed such men as Lincoln and Emerson, have surely some energy for good."—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

The oratory of Robert C. Winthrop, who outlived all his associates in the Boston rhetorical school, re-

Robert Charles Winthrop, 1809–

sembles that of Everett in many points. With all their differences, these Boston orators were much alike, in political conservatism, in debt to classical culture, in grace and beauty of style, and in a certain verbosity and pedantry—or at least an over-fondness for classical allusions. Winthrop, a descendant of Governor John Winthrop, and his filial biographer, was a law-student in the office of Daniel Webster, became a "Webster Whig," and afterward, like many of similar mind, united with the Democratic party.* A State legislator, a Representative in Congress, Speaker of the House, and United States Senator, his career closely followed the lines of the other orators of Massachusetts, who have been mentioned here. Like them, he interested himself in many historical, scientific, and art movements, and delivered addresses over corner-stones, beside new statues, or at anniversary gatherings. America is fond of commemorative occasions, and is determined to make good, in some degree, its lack of venerable historical monuments. As Choate and Everett paid the honors of eulogistic tribute to the memory of Webster, so Winthrop delivered the appropriate commemorative discourse after the death of his friend Everett. If this school as a whole lacked critical insight and fearless discrimination between the good and the bad elements in the subjects of discourse, it must be remembered

* It will be remembered that Webster, who died just before the presidential election of 1852, advised his friends to vote for Pierce.

that it is not easy to speak in condemnation of a great man lately departed; and that the modern fashion of denouncing a dead Carlyle as "a brute and a boor," or a dead Longfellow as "the poet of the commonplace," had not been invented in the days of the great Boston orators.

It was Winthrop's rare good fortune to deliver the oration on the laying of the corner-stone of the Washington monument (July 4, 1848), and also to write (though, because of illness, he could not deliver) the oration at its dedication (Feb. 21, 1885). His closing words—those of an old man trained in the schools of the former day—caught the spirit of the newer time, and warned the men of the modern republic not to lose the enthusiasm and self-sacrifice of their forefathers:

Winthrop at the Dedication of the Washington Monument.

A celebrated philosopher of antiquity, who was nearly contemporary with Christ, but who could have known nothing of what was going on in Judæa, and who, alas! did not always "reck his own rede"—wrote thus to a younger friend, as a precept for worthy life: "Some good man must be singled out and kept ever before our eyes, that we may live as if he were looking on, and do every thing as if he could see it."

Let me borrow the spirit, if not the exact letter, of that precept, and address it to the young men of my country: "Keep ever in your mind, and before your mind's eye, the loftiest standard of character. You have it, I need not say, supremely and unapproachably, in Him who spake as never man spake, and lived as never man lived, and who died for the sins of the world. That character stands apart and alone. But of merely mortal man the monument we have dedicated to-day points out the one for all Americans to study, to imitate, and, as far as may

be, to emulate. Keep his example and his character ever before your eyes and in your hearts. Live and act as if he were seeing and judging your personal conduct and your public career. Strive to approximate that lofty standard, and measure your integrity and your patriotism by your nearness to it, or your departure from it. The prime meridian of universal longitude, on sea or land, may be at Greenwich, or at Paris, or where you will. But the prime meridian of pure, disinterested, patriotic, exalted human character will be marked forever by yonder Washington obelisk!"

Yes, to the young men of America, under God, it remains, as they rise up from generation to generation, to shape the destinies of their country's future—and woe unto them if, regardless of the great example which is set before them, they prove unfaithful to the tremendous responsibilities which rest upon them!

Yet let me not seem, even for a moment, to throw off upon the children the rightful share of those responsibilities which belongs to their fathers. Upon us, upon us, it devolves to provide that the advancing generations shall be able to comprehend and equal to meet the demands which are thus before them. It is ours—it is yours especially, Senators and Representatives, to supply them with the means of that universal education which is the crying want of our land, and without which any intelligent and successful free government is impossible. . . .

The inspiration of the centennial anniversary of that first great inauguration must not be lost upon us. Would that any words of mine could help us all, old and young, to resolve that the principles and character and example of Washington, as he came forward to take the oaths of office on that day, shall once more be recognized and reverenced as the model for all who succeed him, and that his disinterested purity and patriotism shall be the supreme test and standard of American statesmanship! That standard can never be taken away from us. The most

elaborate and durable monuments may perish. But neither the forces of nature, nor any fiendish crime of man, can ever mar or mutilate a great example of public or private virtue.

Our matchless obelisk stands proudly before us to-day, and we hail it with the exultation of a united and glorious nation. It may or may not be proof against the cavils of critics, but nothing of human construction is against the casualties of time. The storms of winter must blow and beat upon it. The action of the elements must soil and discolor it. The lightnings of heaven may scar and blacken it. An earthquake may shake its foundations. Some mighty tornado, or resistless cyclone, may rend its massive blocks asunder and hurl huge fragments to the ground. But the character which it commemorates and illustrates is secure. It will remain unchanged and unchangeable in all its consummate purity and splendor, and will more and more command the homage of succeeding ages in all regions of the earth.

God be praised, that character is ours forever.

Elsewhere in the country were many orators of no small ability. The chief of those outside New England, in the period just before, and including, the war, was William H. Seward, of New York. Born in the year of Webster's graduation from college, he died just before the reëlection of U. S. Grant to the presidency. His career thus bridged the earlier and later times in American political history. Though a college graduate, his education was less complete than that of his Massachusetts peers, and his political work less closely connected with literary forms and successes. All his life a Whig or Republican leader in New York or national politics, he was in 1860 an unsuccessful presidential as-

William Henry Seward, 1801–1872.

pirant. According to the just testimony of his friend and eulogist, Charles Francis Adams, Mr. Seward did more than any man to break down in New York, the self-seeking, office-hunting, "ring" political system of Aaron Burr at one time and Martin Van Buren at another. "The difference between Seward and Burr or Van Buren is the difference between Sir Isaac Newton and a gamester—the clear perception of great results drawn from abstract philosophical deductions, and the sharp calculation of chances applied to the management of dice." Seward, as Governor of New York, Senator, and Secretary of state during the civil war, was a patriot and a conservative. He saved his country from sad disaster by yielding to the just demands of England in the Mason and Slidell affair in 1861. His diplomatic caution, aided by personal integrity and a knowledge of the philosophy of history, give value to his speeches, and especially to his (posthumously published) "Diplomatic History of the Civil War in America." This work, with its many documents by Mr. Seward, illustrates his mental, political, and literary powers. Not externally brilliant, they were of solid worth, and secured for the United States diplomatic triumphs as great and as essential as those of Gettysburg and Appomattox.

Conservative Opponents of Slavery.

Randolph and Calhoun were intense, uncompromising defenders of States'-rights and slavery. Clay, Webster, Choate, Everett, and Winthrop were conservative opponents of slave-extension, devoted to the North, but still more to the Union, and not advocating or promoting any ex-

treme or individual theory. They wished, by any or all just means, to secure the greatest good to the greatest number, to restrain fanaticism in all sections of the country, to continue and strengthen the stability of the republic. Their work was therefor general rather than particular. They spoke on patriotic anniversary occasions; they restated and enforced the principles laid down by the founders of the nation, whose names and work they eulogized; they argued for measures of compromise; they restrained as well as urged on. This general political method was aided by their broad, old-fashioned rhetorical habits, and by their disinclination for sharp, incisive criticism. But another school quite matched the "fire-eaters" of the South, in vigor and in unswerving devotion to a single purpose. These were the Abolitionists. Their numbers were comparatively small, but in zeal they made up for what they lacked in physical strength. Some of them were men of high social position, academic education, and genius, like James Russell Lowell; others lacked all these advantages. Not a few wished to abolish other things than slavery—for instance, the "orthodox" creed, the use of meat, existing marriage laws, the prevalent labor system. But, with all their eccentricities—which, in the case of John Brown, amounted to the promoting and justification of midnight murders, whereby the laws of the land and of Christianity were set aside for a "higher law" and an alleged special inspiration—they were desperately in earnest. Whatever might be said of their means, whether or not they were wholly in the

right, the thing they opposed was clearly and terribly wrong. By their actions they hastened the collapse, in "fateful lightning" and by the "terrible swift sword," of the system of slavery, which would have waned, in longer time, before slower and milder, but inevitable, opposition.

Without mentioning the many who fought long and loyally in the abolition cause, and without discussing the work of those who were connected with politics, or journalism, or philanthropy, rather than with the literature of oratory, one should here name four great Abolitionists: William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Charles Sumner, and Abraham Lincoln. Garrison's work was done with his pen as much as with his voice, though he was well known as an orator. In youth he printed an obscure volume of poems (published by Oliver Johnson, another Abolitionist); he was a voluminous letter-writer, and he contributed much to the several periodicals he edited, of which *The Liberator* was the most famous and the most influential. His written words were a power by reason of the personal force and intense convictions that urged them forth. He wrote not to make literature, but, like the Puritans, to apply an ethical principle. To this every thing in Garrison's life was bent. "I will be heard," said he, in the first number of *The Liberator;* and he was heard. He went too fast and too far; he included in his vituperation the Christian religion and the Constitution of the United States. Indeed, he favored the dissolution of the Union, if by this means alone slavery could be abolished, or cut off

William Lloyd Garrison, 1805–1879.

from relations with the North. The churches were, for the most part, pro-slavery or silent, and the Constitution was certainly not an anti-slavery document, therefore Garrison disliked both. His own personal religion inculcated non-resistance, and the doctrine called "perfectionism," "complete holiness," or "sanctification," but these not in the usual evangelical sense. Like Thoreau, he felt himself outside or above existing governments, which he practically criticised, and was ready, theoretically, to destroy, when he thought them wrong. Toward those who, hating slavery and desiring its abolition, differed with him concerning the means of its extirpation, he was sometimes bitter and domineering. For gradual emancipation and schemes of colonization he had a hearty contempt, and would not always treat their advocates with patience. His courage, and his extreme position, made him for years the acknowledged leader of the anti-slavery cause. A reward for his arrest and conviction was offered by the Legislature of one Southern State, and his name was familiar, North and South, for thirty years before the war. His few books and many editorials and speeches are not extant in a collected form, and his work was an influence rather than a creation. But as an influence it was very powerful. Mr. Garrison showed his inherent dignity and greatness by retiring from public life at the close of the war, when slavery was abolished by constitutional amendment. At the same time (the close of 1865) the publication of *The Liberator* was discontinued. By means which Garrison could hardly have anticipated, but which his noble

and self-sacrificing work furthered, in the midst of poverty, obloquy, and personal violence, was accomplished that triumph celebrated by his friend Whittier in his "Laus Deo" poem, closing:

How they pale,
Ancient myth and song and tale,
In this wonder of our days,
When the cruel rod of war
Blossoms white with righteous law,
And the wrath of man is praise!

Blotted out!
All within and all about
Shall a fresher life begin;
Freer breathe the universe
As it rolls its heavy curse
On the dead and buried sin!

It is done!
In the circuit of the sun
Shall the sound thereof go forth.
It shall bid the sad rejoice,
It shall give the dumb a voice,
It shall belt with joy the earth!

Ring and swing,
Bells of joy! On morning's wing
Sound the song of praise abroad!
With a sound of broken chains
Tell the nations that he reigns,
Who alone is Lord and God!

Wendell Phillips, 1811–1884.

Wendell Phillips was not less interested than Garrison in the emancipation of the slave, and the chief efforts of his life were directed toward that end. But he was by nature and by art an orator, even more than a reformer. To speak was his life-work. As Horace Greeley said,

Phillips made men think it was easy to be an orator. He did not put the form before the spirit; he was no mere rhetorician, hunting for a cause whereon to display his eloquence; but he would have spoken gracefully and strongly upon any question which aroused his interest. So, indeed, he did. His intellectual equipment, and, to a certain extent, his tastes, were academic; like Sumner, he was fond of classical themes and allusions, and when occasion demanded, he could take pleasure in mere external finish. Well-read in ancient and modern literature, a master in the use of invective and epigram, possessed of wit, which both Garrison and Sumner lacked, he charmed the cultivated and impressed the ignorant. A winsome personal presence, and a serene, undisturbed manner, added to the attractiveness of his words, and enabled him to speak before great audiences of enemies. As courageous as Garrison, he refused to honor a Clay or a Webster even after their death. "We do not play politics," said he, in 1853: "anti-slavery is no half-jest with us; it is a terrible earnest, with life or death, worse than life or death, on the issue." "No amount of eloquence, no sheen of official position, no loud grief of partisan friends, would ever lead us to ask monuments or walk in fine processions for pirates; and the sectarian zeal or selfish ambition which gives up, deliberately and in full knowledge of the facts, three million of helpless human beings to hopeless ignorance, daily robbery, systematic prostitution, and murder, which the law is neither able nor undertakes to prevent or avenge, is more

monstrous, in our eyes, than the love of gold which takes a score of lives with merciful quickness on the high seas." "To have elaborated for the nation the only plan of redemption, pointed out the only exodus from this 'sea of troubles,' is much. This we claim to have done in our motto of IMMEDIATE, UNCONDITIONAL EMANCIPATION ON THE SOIL."

A man with these convictions, fortified by personal courage, by self-sacrifice, by freedom from ambition for wealth or office, and by the literary and personal arts of the true orator, could not fail to be a power in the land. Besides this great work, he promoted temperance and woman's rights, and took pleasure in such side-triumphs as that won in the lecture the public liked so well, on "The Lost Arts." But when slavery was abolished Phillips' occupation was gone. Lacking the self-restraint of Garrison, and the philosophical mind of Sumner, he did not retire from public life, but continued to speak, advocating the cause of Ireland, or of a perpetual greenback currency, or of the "rights of labor" as interpreted by demagogues who used his abilities to further their own purposes. After the great battle of anti-slavery had been fought and won, Phillips' strong blows were struck into the air.

Sumner, agreeing with the abolition principles of Garrison, Phillips, Whittier, Lowell, and the advanced New England school, was enabled to apply those principles in public life, and to the legislative acts of Congress. Elected to the senate in 1851, by a coalition of "Free-Soilers" and Democrats, he remained a member of that body

Charles Sumner, 1811–1874.

until his death. The cruel and long-injurious assaults made upon his person in 1856, in the senate-chamber, by Brooks, a pro-slavery Representative from South Carolina, made Sumner more than ever a central figure in the anti-slavery movement. Like Garrison in the Boston mob of 1835, he had suffered physical martyrdom in the cause. But his speeches, elaborate, logical, clear, and eloquent, needed no adventitious aid to fasten them in the public mind. Twelve compact volumes contain his chief speeches in Congress and elsewhere. They are virtually a history of the anti-slavery movement, in and out of Congress, and of the legislation which secured to the freed negroes their civil rights. Sumner was the parliamentary leader of the Abolitionists, and his speeches, in fulness, method, and aptness of treatment, form the most valuable literary memorial of their work. Lacking the quick fire of Garrison's or Phillips' words, their lofty scorn of wrong, their intense enthusiasm, and their loyal devotion to the "genius of universal emancipation" make them seem, even now, like words from the heights. Sumner's speeches mirror the character of the man: ever devoted to principle, free from sordid aim or mercenary ambition, intolerant of subterfuge or disloyal compromise, eager to lay at the feet of freedom the spoils of learning and of time. There was, however, another side to Sumner's character: he was proud, selfish, discourteous to his adversaries, intensely aggravating in personal vituperation, sure of his own infallibility, and, save toward his intimate friends, utterly lacking in tact. Emerson's words on

tact were, in reality, sadly applicable to his friend Sumner :

> "What boots it, thy virtue,
> What profit thy parts,
> While one thing thou lackest,—
> The art of all arts ?"

Again, he lacked those important equipments of a great orator : wit, and the power to see and to make visible all sides of a subject. His speeches, even the great argument for peace, called "The True Grandeur of Nations," sometimes seem heavy and dull, save when he spoke in anger. But his words would last in the literature of oratory, if only because, with all their faults, they expressed and vindicated the right of free speech at a time when too many were timid.

Abraham Lincoln, 1809–1865.

The last of the Abolitionists—the one to whom it fell to write the Proclamation of Emancipation—was Abraham Lincoln. Lacking a collegiate education, taught by his own efforts, Lincoln made good use of such opportunities for reading as he had possessed. He, "a plain blunt man," could say : "I only speak right on"; but some of his later speeches are models of terse and forcible expression, and undoubtedly deserve mention here. His Gettysburg address has been already quoted ; it, and his second inaugural address, March 4, 1865, are pearls of American literature. Re-read the mighty sentences — worthy of a Hebrew prophet — with which the inaugural closes :

> The Almighty has his own purposes. Woe unto the world because of offences, for it must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the

offence cometh. If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern there any departure from those Divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, that the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphans, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

Elsewhere in this volume are discussed the conditions which failed to promote the cultivation and spread of literature in the South. The power of politics in the social and intellectual life of that section produced—especially in the first fifty years of the country's history—great statesmen, the names of several of whom have been considered in this chapter. Much of the later oratory of the South, represented by such men as Robert Y. Hayne (Webster's opponent in the great Union debate), William C. Preston, John J. Crittenden, John C.

Breckinridge, Thomas L. Clingman, and Robert Toombs, is no longer studied or esteemed, save, perhaps, in the States where they lived. The "South" is slowly giving up its provincialism, taking its place in the general literary work of the country, and becoming willing to measure its great men and its small by just canons of comparative criticism. Its "past at least is secure," but so is its future, if it act wisely. The downfall of its caste- and manorial-system, with the spread of education, will supply it with orators enough.

Two names belonging to the bygone South deserve brief mention at the close of this chronicle of American political literature. By an interesting coincidence, Jefferson Davis, the only president, and Alexander H. Stephens, the only vice-president, of the "Confederate States of America," made large and full records of the times, all of which they saw, and a great part of which they were. Mr. Davis' "Rise and Fall of the Confederate States of America" cannot claim very high literary rank. If it is readable, it is so on account of the important events described, and of the relations of the writer to those events; and not because of any inherent attractiveness or excellence of style. Furthermore, it cannot be praised for the historical quality of judicial impartiality, which it assuredly does not possess. It would perhaps have been too much to expect that Mr. Davis, with his well-known temper of mind, could show any special fairness toward his victorious opponents at the North. But his treatment of those whom he disliked, in the military and civil councils

Jefferson Davis, b. 1808.

of the Confederacy itself, is neither serene nor generous. The work, however, is an important historical treasury, which, in its relations to its producer, can hardly be ignored by the literary student. After all, merely artistic canons do not determine the fame, influence, and place of *all* printed books; and a literary-political chronicle of America should not ignore the personal records produced by the head of the greatest "lost cause" in American history.

Other reasons, and stronger ones, turn the reader's attention to the important work of Mr. Stephens. His history of the war between the States is by far the most important historical treatise produced in the South itself on this theme. Nowhere else are the nature, growth, and application of the States'-rights theory so well reviewed as in these able, candid, and full chapters. When the final war-history shall be written from the great available mass of material, the author will probably find these two volumes of more service, as an original authority, than the useful histories by Horace Greeley, Benson J. Lossing, or John William Draper, on the Northern side; or E. A. Pollard, on the Southern. The many books with reference to the lives and labors of abolitionists, "fire-eaters," Union-lovers, war statesmen, military campaigners, and private soldiers will, in due time, leave their quintessence in the library of pure literature.

Alexander Hamilton Stephens, 1812–1883.

CHAPTER VII.

WASHINGTON IRVING.

WASHINGTON IRVING was the author who first gave American literature a place in the European mind. Readers in England and on the Continent had heard an occasional faint echo of American theological controversies; a few students of philosophy had taken the trouble to read Jonathan Edwards; many had followed the course of transatlantic oratory and political writing; and Benjamin Franklin had been received by scholars, scientists, and diplomatists as their peer, perhaps their superior. But before Irving no American writer had been read as a representative of literature, pure and simple. Irving wrote *books*, not theological treatises, political arguments, speeches, or scientific papers; and these books were accepted by English readers at even more than their real value. Their writer possessed the qualities which well fitted him to be a literary pioneer. He was loyal to the soil and traditions of his own country, yet quick to assimilate the customs and characteristics of other lands; he first made distinctly American themes familiar to the world of letters, and he, also, in England and Spain, collected romantic treas-

Washington Irving, 1783–1859.

ures which had escaped the eye of earlier narrators. He was influenced by a humor and pathos which were genuine, and he was deeply read in the eighteenth-century writers of England—particularly the essayists—whose style he was able to absorb or reproduce in such a way as to continue the literary traditions of preceding years. His range was wide, covering essay, fiction, history, biography, travel; now he was tenderly pathetic, now broadly humorous. His external English style was fairly entitled to be called Addisonian, and he easily surpassed Charles Lamb in evenness of execution. Behind all that he did, appeared his own serene, happy, and well-balanced character. If we do not carry the parallel too far, we may characterize him as the George Washington of American literature.

For these reasons Irving was long deemed the first American writer, in merit as well as in time. The renown of Hawthorne or Emerson in later years overshadowed his own; and the severer critics found in Irving's stories fancy rather than imagination. It may justly be said that as a romantic historian Irving must yield to Prescott; of the philosophy of history he had little idea; and his full life of Washington and his charming biography of Goldsmith are not literature of the first class. Even in his justly-praised style there is an element of artificiality and of attitudinizing graciousness, which annoys the nineteenth-century reader, and which is hardly a mark of the large literary manner. Washington Irving is not the greatest American author, but he was a man who did our literature

First American Writer.

a noteworthy service, whose pioneer work was admirable, and whose high renown, in his lifetime and since, was deserved. Why criticise one great writer because he has not the qualities of another? or why attempt to assign him a precise numerical rank?

Does an author create his literary surroundings, at least in part, and shape his own career, or is he created by those surroundings, and shaped by circumstance, time, and environment? Neither theory can be followed to the extreme; but of Irving it may be said that he was moulded by his birth and situation, and also formed in large measure the literary conditions which he shared. Of British parentage (his father Scotch and his mother English), he was born in New York in the year of the treaty of peace between England and the United States, after the Revolution. The first conspicuous American author was neither a Puritan nor a Southron; the local tone of his American writings is that of New York City and the Hudson. His religious element, so far as it exists, is that of placid, old-fashioned Episcopacy, undisturbed by "modern thought" or any special idea of progress. The American elements of vigor, push, independence, high creative ambition, are lacking in Irving the author, as they were lacking in Irving the man. In literature and in life he was the genial conservative. Washington "blessed" his namesake in New York, when Irving was a baby; and the Washingtonian courtesy and contented reserve always characterized Irving, without the dogged and self-reliant persistency of the first President.

Irving's education was obtained neither at Harvard nor Yale; and his parents did not choose to send him, perhaps against his will, to Columbia, the college of his brothers,—then, as now, virtually an advanced school for New Yorkers only. He was a great reader, and duly went to school, but the culture he afterward showed so conspicuously in his writings was self-acquired—as indeed all culture must be. He early began to scribble, both in prose and verse; literary precocity was then common; but his first writings were less meritorious than those of Bryant and Longfellow, both of whom were brilliant boys. Irving, like Bryant and Longfellow, thought to study law, but the unwise intention was soon abandoned. Peter Irving, his brother, was the editor of the *New York Morning Chronicle*, to which, in 1802, Washington contributed letters over the signature of Jonathan Oldstyle. Those were the days of newspaper pseudonymous essays; these letters by Irving were of a class familiar in London for seventy-five years. They satirized town faults and foibles, spoke a good word for manliness of character, and discussed the theatrical condition and ephemera in general. They have not been preserved in the complete editions of Irving, and merely showed his "bent," which was clearly to be that of an eighteenth-century essayist, with such wider range of labor as newer times made necessary. A sickly and apparently consumptive youth, Irving walked much in the open air, thereby developing his local patriotism, and his familiarity with New York and the Hudson region. These pedestrian

His Early Days.

tours failed to restore his health, and at twenty-one he was sent to Europe. His tour was like that which so many English university men had been accustomed to take, ever since the days of Chaucer. France was first visited, then Italy. He was an observer rather than a student, but he was already beginning to profit by literary society and conversation with men of culture. Before he left America he had met Charles Brockden Brown, the earliest American novelist; and in Rome he walked and talked with Washington Allston, one of the earliest American painters, also, in after years, a poet and novelist. Young Irving, quitting Rome, and abandoning a whimsical idea of becoming a painter like Allston, next went to Paris, the Netherlands, and London, thence again home.

The European wanderings of a young man—even of a young author—are too common to concern the literary historian. But in Irving's case the "grand tour" was an important thing. That new creature, the American author, was getting his education; the crude Westerner was becoming a citizen of the world. To see Mrs. Siddons and Kemble; to talk with the greatest of talkers, Madame de Staël; to tread the pavement of Westminster Abbey or St. Peter's; to gaze on Vesuvius and the Coliseum,—all this was a new experience for an American, and to Irving was a great benefit. Nowadays, our Europe is everywhere; then it had to be visited if one would assimilate any part of it. He had not, as yet, visited that Spain of which he was to become so ardent an admirer in after years; but he had got breadth of

mind and a culture which, though not academic, was perhaps better for Irving than any thing the meagre course at Harvard, Columbia, or Princeton could have given. Meanwhile, best of all, health had come again, and with his new bodily and mental equipment Irving finally abandoned the law and set out as a man of letters. Opportunities were few, but New York offered more, perhaps, than any other city; and the young writer had friends in the newspaper and magazine offices, who could at least give him a start.

Literary Style.

Irving was born in the eighteenth century, before the great romantic revival in England; and he was well read in the English essay, as well as in the novelists of the period of 1750, and in the classic poets of the school of Pope. He felt the force of the romantic movement, in due time, and shared it, in his search for foreign and picturesque themes in history and fiction; but after all, his training and tastes were of the old-fashioned, well-regulated, academic order. The Addisonian type has not won a conspicuous place in American literature, but Irving, so far as he was Addisonian, achieved a distinguished success. Brockden Brown introduced the weird, the romantic, the appalling, the "native American," and made a failure, on the whole; Irving, using the English manner for his treatment of American themes, made one of those happy compromises to which pioneers sometimes owe their success. Incautiousness may retard a reform, as truly as timid conservatism; Irving wrote like an Englishman, and thus pleased the English and also

his countrymen, as yet timid and colonial in literary matters; but he portrayed the Knickerbocker Dutchmen, the scenery and characteristics of the city of New York, the beauties and poetic capabilities of the Hudson, the folk-lore and humanity of the land of Rip van Winkle and Katrina van Tassel, the vastness of the half-explored New West, the character and career of the first American President. Those English critics are wide of the mark who declare that Irving was merely an English gentleman and author who spent a part of his time at Sunnyside on the Hudson, and occasionally wrote on American themes. Irving was characteristically American, and was the first of our writers to show Americans and Englishmen that good literature could spring from native soil. On the other hand, Irving saw plainly that he could not lose sight of the old models nor break with transatlantic traditions, and that he must devote a good share of his writings, in their various divisions, to subjects taken from English history, literature, or social life; to the romances of Spain; or to the records of the world's past.

Knickerbocker's New York.

The little paper called *Salmagundi*, written by Washington and William Irving and James Kirke Paulding, was simply Addison's ghost, transferred to New York and transformed into a censor of Knickerbocker society. Its Launcelot Langstaff, William Wizard, and Anthony Evergreen, its essays on the men and things of the day, and its occasional sharp thrusts of wit, made their little shivery sensations in provincial New York, and were duly and promptly forgotten. Much more successful, and much more

deserving of success, was that elaborate burlesque, "Knickerbocker's History of New York," which Irving at first designed to be a mere parody of Samuel L. Mitchill's pretentious "Picture of New York," a book then newly issued. Peter Irving worked with his brother on the skit at first, but soon was obliged to sail for England. Washington thereupon changed the plan of his humorous history, making it a pseudo-veracious Knickerbocker-Dutch chronicle, and publishing it at length, accompanied by the ancient but never quite stale device of a statement concerning the mysterious disappearance of a half-insane antiquarian, the discovery of a manuscript, etc. The more stolid New-Yorkers were galled by this transparent fraud, and a few of them, even after they had been informed of the joke, and had read the book, were hotly angry at the irreverence shown their ancestors. Meanwhile the rest of the world read, laughed, and praised.

In December, 1809, therefore, the United States had a book of its own, a work in the genuine field of belles-lettres, original in scene, plot, anecdote, and character, and possessed of sound literary merit. Nothing so good, of its kind, had previously been written by an American; and, indeed, a Swift or a De Foe, if living in New York at the time, need not have been ashamed of its authorship. A satire, it was based on truth, as all good satires must be; its central figure, the Dutchman in New Amsterdam, was a creation; its incidents were well managed; and in it was achieved that hard-won triumph, the spinning of a joke through three or four hundred

duodecimo pages. It was occasionally coarse, but Fielding, it should be remembered, had not long been dead; its strokes were sometimes too broad and deep for refinement, but at least it won the notice it sought. Scott praised it across the water, and the American public was stimulated by it to reading habits. Its very frankness and breeziness were emancipators. Irving had made a strong start as a literary man, and America had a modest classic, *indigena terræ.*

The "Knickerbocker school" is a convenient term (though no more accurate than the expression "Lake poets") by which Washington Irving, his friend James Kirke Paulding, and the poets Joseph Rodman Drake and Fitz-Greene Halleck are grouped together. Irving wrote "Knickerbocker's New York"; all four were New-Yorkers by residence, and represented Knickerbocker traditions in some degree; and to the long-lived *Knickerbocker Magazine* some of them contributed. Together they aided materially in the formation in New York of a literary coterie or loosely connected school, which it much needed in the early years of the century.

Irving in England.

After the appearance of "Knickerbocker's History," Irving dabbled in magazine editorship and in business, his brothers Peter and Ebenezer having started a commercial enterprise in Liverpool, whither he went. Both these employments failed to support him, and he returned to literature. Much English and Scotch society was open to him on this British tour; he met Scott, Campbell, Jeffrey, the publisher Murray, and other men of books, and

broadened his knowledge and his reputation. Business had failed; father, mother, and loved one were dead; and Irving, at thirty-five, temporarily quit his native land and set out in the literary life in London. The work with which he began his career was the best that ever came from his pen, one of the ten or twelve choicest books produced by an American: "The Sketch-Book." In accordance with a fashion then prevailing, its American publication was in numbers; but in England, after some business delays, the work was produced by the great Murray in two volumes. Here, as before, the powerful Scott praised Irving, and several editors, Whig and Tory, —Lockhart in *Blackwood*, Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh*, and others—gave it a hearty welcome.

"The Sketch-Book."

A book had been published, after many difficulties; praise had come from kind friends, and favorable criticism from strangers;—what does this very old story signify? Not much, ordinarily, but in this instance one notes that, even more than in the case of "Knickerbocker's History," English critics were actually commending an American book. Best of all, they were praising its grace of style, its depth of pathos, its masterly quality. To make Byron weep was not a great achievement (a story tells us that he wept over "The Broken Heart"), for in that increasingly sentimental age everybody wept on slight provocation; but it was a great thing to show that an American book could have solid value, even when not written upon a religious, political, or grotesque theme. As the years have gone by, the position of this American classic—it may fairly be called one of

our classics—remains secure. The new American-Dutch vein of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip van Winkle"; the pleasant descriptions of English country life in "The Country Church," the "Christmas Sketches," "Rural Life in England," and "Rural Funerals"; the quiet pathos of "The Broken Heart" and "The Pride of the Village"; the humorous musings on the "Mutability of Literature" and the "Art of Book-Making"; and the gaily moving story called "The Spectre Bridegroom,"—all these, and others almost as well known, were a real addition to literature. The Westminster Abbey essay is quite equal to that on the same theme in "The Spectator." All through the collection are marks of an over-nicety of manner, an unwillingness to "speak out," that in time becomes tiresome; but artificial finish had not been too common in our literature before Irving. If there is sentimentality, as well as sentiment, in such passages as this, which I quote as a sample of many, there are in it, also, a heart of truth and a form of beauty. "Feeling," and feeling expressed in flowing language, was a mark of the literature of the time; certainly in Irving it appears at its best:

> Ay, go to the grave of buried love, and meditate! There settle the account with thy conscience for every past benefit unrequited, for every past endearment unregarded, of that departed being who can never—never—never return to be soothed by thy contrition!
>
> If thou art a child, and hast ever added a sorrow to the soul, or a furrow to the silvered brow of an affectionate parent—if thou art a husband, and hast ever caused the fond bosom that ventured its whole happiness in thy arms

to doubt one moment of thy kindness or thy truth—if thou art a friend, and hast ever wronged, in thought, or word, or deed, the spirit that generously confided in thee—if thou art a lover, and hast ever given one unmerited pang to that true heart which now lies cold and still beneath thy feet; then be sure that every unkind look, every ungracious word, every ungentle action, will come thronging back upon thy memory, and knocking dolefully at thy soul—then be sure that thou wilt lie down sorrowing and repentant on the grave, and utter the unheard groan, and pour the unavailing tear—more deep, more bitter, because unheard and unavailing.

Then weave thy chaplet of flowers, and strew the beauties of nature about the grave; console thy broken spirit, if thou canst, with these tender yet futile tributes of regret; but take warning by the bitterness of this thy contrite affliction over the dead, and henceforth be more faithful and affectionate in the discharge of thy duties to the living.

One more extract (from the essay called "English Writers on America") may be made from "The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.," to illustrate Irving's discreet and strong position at a time of bitterness and misunderstanding between England and America. It was his course, as outlined in these words, that helped to win him a high reputation in both countries, and to emancipate American literature from a merely colonial state:

Irving on National Prejudices.

What have we to do with national prejudices? They are the inveterate diseases of old countries, contracted in rude and ignorant ages, when nations knew but little of each other, and looked beyond their own boundaries with distrust and hostility. We, on the contrary, have sprung

into national existence in an enlightened and philosophic age, when the different parts of the habitable world, and the various branches of the human family, have been indefatigably studied and made known to each other; and we forego the advantages of our birth, if we do not shake off the national prejudices as we would the local superstitions of the old world.

But above all, let us not be influenced by any angry feelings, so far as to shut our eyes to the perception of what is really excellent and amiable in the English character. We are a young people, necessarily an imitative one, and must take our examples and models, in a great degree, from the existing nations of Europe. There is no country more worthy of our study than England. The spirit of her constitution is most analogous to ours. The manners of her people—their intellectual activity—their freedom of opinion—their habits of thinking on those subjects which concern the dearest interests and most sacred charities of private life, are all congenial to the American character; and, in fact, are all intrinsically excellent; for it is in the moral feeling of the people that the deep foundations of British prosperity are laid; and however the superstructure may be time-worn, or overrun by abuses, there must be something solid in the basis, admirable in the materials, and stable in the structure of an edifice that so long has towered unshaken amidst the tempests of the world.

Let it be the pride of our writers, therefore, discarding all feelings of irritation, and disdaining to retaliate the illiberality of British authors, to speak of the English nation without prejudice, and with determined candor. While they rebuke the indiscriminating bigotry with which some of our countrymen admire and imitate every thing English, merely because it is English, let them frankly point out what is really worthy of approbation. We may thus place England before us as a perpetual volume of reference, wherein are recorded sound deductions from ages of

experience; and while we avoid the errors and absurdities which may have crept into the page, we may draw thence golden maxims of practical wisdom, wherewith to strengthen and to embellish our national character.

Irving was now a popular author, and received for his new books those large payments which were in vogue in London at the beginning of the century. "Bracebridge Hall" appeared in the spring of 1822—virtually a continuation of what may be called the Merry England chapters in "The Sketch-Book." As a genial chronicle of upper-class English life and character, nothing better could be asked for. Irving's mannerism had now become inveterate, but it was a mannerism in which well-balanced sentences, genuine humor, faithful descriptions, and hearty morality always had a place. His refinement of style was sometimes excessive, and his readers never completely lose sight of the rhetorician manipulating the printed words.

"Bracebridge Hall."

After a foolish and not very remunerative period of hack dramatic writing with that third-rate play-wright, John Howard Payne, Irving brought out his "Tales of a Traveller," a work with the finish of "Bracebridge Hall," and with more spirit and spontaneity, such as fiction should have, as compared with sketches. As a story-teller, Irving stands high in the second class, in our literature; his tales, at their best, are readable, original, and artistic, though they seldom burn and glow, and master the reader, making him feel the presence of genius. Detailed consideration of Irving's place in fiction must be postponed to another volume of this work—that on American poets and novelists.

"Tales of a Traveller."

In 1826 began the preparation of an important division of Irving's work—that devoted to Spanish subjects. As has been said, Irving was not possessed of first-class powers in historical writing; as an analyst he was not at his best, and dry search for philosophical principles in history was certainly distasteful to him. But his fondness for romance, his descriptive powers, and his ability to make out-of-the-way subjects attractive, aided him in the half trustworthy records of the Goths, the Spaniards, and the Arab-Moors on the Iberian peninsula. Some of his Spanish stories pleasantly remind the reader of the characteristics of the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments"; while his "Life and Voyages of Columbus," which appeared in 1828, did more than any preceding book to interest American readers in historical subjects. The romantic American-Spanish theme was congenial to Irving, the narrative was vigorously carried forward, and the literary style was worthy of the author of "The Sketch-Book." Irving's residence in Madrid, between 1826 and 1829, was of great importance in the development of his mature mind, and in the progress of his literary career. "How full of interest," he exclaimed, "everything is, connected with the old times in Spain! I am more and more delighted with the old literature of the country, its chronicles, plays, and romances. It has the wild vigor and luxuriance of the forests of my native country, which, however, savage and entangled, are more captivating to my imagination than the finest parks and cultivated woodlands." The reasons for Irving's success in his lives of

Spanish Stories.

"Columbus and his Companions," his "Conquest of Granada," and his "Legends of the Conquest of Spain," are contained in this graceful sentence. With all his conventionality, with all his debt to classic English writers, Irving never forgot that he was an American, and that the new American literature deserved, and should have, his heartiest support. The charming stories comprised in the "Alhambra" volume, not less than the Hudson legends, show his fertility of thought, his originality of invention, and his romantic tendency. Spain, as well as New Amsterdam, lived again in his pages. The "Life of Columbus" proved anew that a foreign writer may produce a better history or biography than a native. Ticknor, Prescott, and Motley but re-emphasized this truth, which Irving, first among American authors, made apparent.

By 1830, Irving had also brought out a chronicle of the "Conquest of Granada," and had been appointed Secretary of Legation at London. Irving's literary position was now commanding, and high honors followed. Oxford made him a Doctor of Civil Law; the Royal Society of Literature bestowed upon him a medal; at home, the *North American Review* was almost extravagant in his praise. Even in money matters his success was worthy of mention; Murray had paid him three thousand guineas for the "Columbus," and two thousand for the "Granada," which, however, proved unremunerative to the publisher. The "Voyages of the Companions of Columbus,"—a sort of anti-climax to "The Voyages of Columbus—naturally

Literary Success.

brought but five hundred guineas, and thence forward, though he received a thousand guineas for the "Alhambra," Irving hardly belonged to the highly-paid coterie. In 1832 he returned to America, which he had not for an instant ceased to call his home, though he had been absent more than half a generation. He was welcomed with honor, and indeed with enthusiasm.

Works of Travel.

The quality of Irving's work for the next seventeen years was inferior to that of the books which he had previously produced. He had scarcely returned, and become settled in his old State of New York, when he undertook what was at that time an elaborate American journey. Timothy Dwight, half a century before, had devoted no less than four volumes to his "Travels in New England and New York"; Irving pushed his explorations much further westward, visiting Missouri, Arkansas, and New Orleans. The record of this journey was called "A Tour on the Prairies,"—which, though not lacking in picturesque descriptions, does not show the art of Irving's European chronicles, and has shared the usual fate of books of travel. This was issued as the first volume of the "Crayon Miscellanies"; the second was devoted to "Abbotsford and Newstead Abbey," and the third to "Legends of Spain,"—describing the downfall of Roderick the Goth, and the Moorish conquest. The three volumes were issued in Philadelphia in 1835. Another work of travel appeared in the same city the next year with the title of "Astoria." John Jacob Astor, the founder of the Astor fortunes, wanted some one to "write up" his

Astoria colony on the Columbia River, in Oregon, and asked Irving to do so. Irving politely suggested that his nephew, Pierre M. Irving, might prepare the materials, and that he himself would retouch them and give the benefit of his name. The two worked together at a country house of Mr. Astor, near New York; they were well paid; and they duly manufactured two volumes which pleased Mr. Astor and won some critical praise. But on the whole they lowered the author's reputation. Literary work for a patron, done to order, is fortunately uncommon in the United States. At Mr. Astor's house Irving met Captain Bonneville, U. S. A., who had had a romantic career on the Western border. Purchasing Bonneville's materials, and making them into shape, the author of "The Sketch-Book" appeared in 1837 as the author of "The Adventures of Captain Bonneville"—a subject more suitable for Cooper than for himself. In 1841 his good nature led him to prepare a memoir of Margaret Miller Davidson, a deceased poet of the "infant phenomenon" order. After this, new editions of "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" appeared, and Irving edited "The Book of the Hudson." All this literary work was not contemptible, but it certainly was not commanding. Irving was living on his past renown.

Minister to Spain.

Meanwhile, however, Irving had generously resigned to the historian Prescott a plan for a history of the Spanish conquest of Mexico, and this generous courtesy was deemed to come from the man who stood at the very forefront of American

literature. Hawthorne's fame and Emerson's were as yet undeveloped, and Longfellow's highest achievements were still unwrought. Irving's best writing was, with two exceptions, all in existence, and it was widely popular. The United States felt that he had done the nation a service which could never—and need never—be repeated. Personal, literary, and even civic honors were heaped upon him; he declined a nomination for the mayoralty of New York, and the secretaryship of the navy under Van Buren. He accepted, however, an appointment as Minister to Spain under the same administration from which Poe vainly sought some little office. During the necessary European tour Irving renewed old acquaintances among the world's famous people, and made new ones, but his absence had little literary result. His four years at Madrid were busied with diplomatic duties, in the troublous times when Queen Isabella was a child in the hands of regents.

The closing years of Irving's life were marked by renewed and loftier literary productiveness. In 1849 appeared his "Life of Oliver Goldsmith," based upon a sketch he had prepared some years before, but now rounded into completion. It is one of the best biographies in the whole range of English literature, just, full, brilliant. It forms a counterpart to Boswell's "Johnson"; no one whose idea of Goldsmith has been formed by Boswell can afford to neglect Irving's presentation of the Irish poet and novelist. In spirit and style this small book is worthy to stand on the shelf with its author's choicest works. Larger and more ambitious in every way, but really

Irving's Biographies.

less praiseworthy, is that two-volume life of "Mahomet and his Successors," which appeared in 1850, and which Irving meant to make one of his greatest productions. It is, however, an unimportant work. Though it is interesting and abounding in touches of romance, it is radically defective in the lack of philosophic analysis of the character, work, and times of the founder of Islam. Between 1855 and 1859 appeared, in five volumes, the elaborate "Life of Washington," upon which Irving had been thinking or working for thirty years. Here, although Irving's defects as a biographer and historian are occasionally evident, his success is unquestionable. His calmness, serenity, and optimism put him into sympathy with Washington, and his studies of the Revolutionary period are full and accurate, so that an impartial picture of a great man is offered. This quiet and just presentation of Washington's character is probably the one that will endure; certainly there seems no immediate necessity to re-write the story. Of all the historical characters delineated by Irving, the two most strongly brought before the reader's eye are the superficial and tenderly impulsive Goldsmith, and the grave and stately, but not wholly sanctified, Washington.

A collection of miscellaneous papers from *The Knickerbocker Magazine* was made in 1855, under the title of "Wolfert's Roost"; and two volumes of "Spanish Papers" were put together in 1866, after the author's death. Irving died in 1859, the year made memorable by the departure of two other noted historians, Prescott and Macaulay.

Critical Estimate of Writings.

Irving's writings fall, in order of merit, under five classes: essays (including the humorous works), stories, biographies, histories, and travels. It is as an essayist that his rank is highest. Nineteenth-century literature has nothing better of the kind to show than Irving's essays: gentle, winsome, pathetic, delicately humorous, neatly descriptive, and artistic. They have not the wit of Lamb's, but they have more humor, and their literary style is more evenly finished. Their old-fashioned flavor, as though they had been taken from the drawers of an ancient secretary, scented with faded rose-leaves, gives them an added charm. The single volume by Irving which is most certain to live is undoubtedly "The Sketch-Book." In it, besides the author's best essays, are his most original and imaginative stories: "Rip van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." The service done to feeble American literature by this remarkable book is not easily to be overestimated; nor has its place been taken in the following years. Inferior to this, but of genuine merit, are those stories—of which "The Alhambra" shows the most picturesqueness and the "Tales of a Traveller" the most skill—which we shall study in a later volume of this work. Of the biographical writings the winsome and lovely "Life of Goldsmith" and the symmetrical "Life of Washington" of course stand out in clear light. The historical works have deservedly fallen in public esteem; the genial historian is not always a safe guide, and even the romantic chronicler must see to it that his romance is sternly guided by pitiless accuracy and

the philosophy of history. As for the books of travel, they were hack work, unworthy of the reputation of the author, and scarcely belonging to literature at all; they may charitably be omitted from any summary of Irving's achievements.

Irving's Moral Quality.

At the beginning of this chapter the name of Addison was mentioned as that of a precursor of Irving. "Addison," says Taine, "made morality fashionable"; and so Irving, in better but still somewhat coarse days, threw his powerful influence on the side of right and truth, when a nation's literature was beginning to take form. Let me quote from another writer—contrary to my usual custom—a just estimate of this element in his work:

> I cannot bring myself to exclude [Irving's moral quality] from a literary estimate, even in the face of the current gospel of art for art's sake. There is something that made Scott and Irving personally loved by the millions of their readers, who had only the dimmest idea of their personality. This was some quality perceived in what they wrote. Each one can define it for himself; there it is, and I do not see why it is not as integral a part of the authors—an element in the estimate of their future position—as what we term their intellect, their knowledge, their skill, or their art. However you rate it, you cannot account for Irving's influence in the world without it. In his tender tribute to Irving, the great-hearted Thackeray, who saw as clearly as anybody the place of mere literary art in the sum total of life, quoted the dying words of Scott to Lockhart,—"Be a good man, my dear." We know well enough that the great author of "The Newcomes" and the great author of "The Heart of Midlothian" recognized the abiding value in literature of integrity, sincerity, purity, charity, faith. These are beneficences; and

Irving's literature, walk round it and measure it by whatever critical instruments you will, is a beneficent literature. The author loved good women and little children and a pure life; he had faith in his fellow-men, a kindly sympathy with the lowest, without any subservience to the highest; he retained a belief in the possibilty of chivalrous actions, and did not care to envelop them in a cynical suspicion; he was an author still capable of an enthusiasm. His books are wholesome, full of sweetness and charm, of humor without any sting, of amusement without any stain; and their more solid qualities are marred by neither pedantry nor pretension.*

* "Washington Irving," by Charles Dudley Warner (American Men of Letters series), pp. 302, 303.

CHAPTER VIII.

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY IN LATER YEARS.

WHAT is the connection between theological writing and literature? Shall theology be classed as a division of science, and science ruled out of literature; or shall literature be said to embrace all written matter, and theology be thus included—since no one will deny that of the mass of printed books the religious proportion is huge? An English critic defines literature thus: "By literature we mean the written thoughts and feelings of intelligent men and women, arranged in a way which will give pleasure to the reader." Granting that "religious literature" expresses the thoughts and feelings of intelligent people, is all of it arranged in a way which gives the reader pleasure? Even if it does, what place shall be assigned it in view of another definition: that real literature must have to do with the ideal, with the imaginative? Would the vast army of creed-makers, of framers of theological systems, of expounders of Scripture, of writers of moral advice, from the "fathers" down to the preachers of to-day, admit that their statements were ideal, imaginative, unreal, and not, every one of them, eternal and immutable truth? Must

Theology and literature.

we be forced to the conclusion that there is no true religious literature save that produced by William Langland or Bunyan of old, and the writers of moral novels and Sunday-school books to-day—many of whom, in their pictures of life, are certainly highly imaginative? Or, on the other hand, may literature, to borrow a phrase from Whittier, "turn the crank of an opinion-mill"?

Art and ethics; literature and religion.

The answer, I believe, is to be found midway between extreme theories. A good man by no means necessarily makes a good book, while a bad man may write an admirable one. Art shall not be measured by ethics, while, on the other hand, not one dictate of common-sense shows that ethics, as ethics, should be brought to any artistic test. Other things being equal, the national literatures, the books in a literature, which have most successfully given art a purpose (yet not forgetting that *ars est celare artem*), have won the greatest success. And purpose surely includes conscience, benefit, progress. This union, for twelve hundred years, has been specially insisted upon by English and American literature; and to it that literature owes many—most—of its triumphs. If Christianity is the best of the world's religions; if at its best it is, as its founder meant it to be, pre-eminently spiritual and unritualistic and undogmatic, then it ought to exert a powerful influence upon literature. So, in fact, it has, in every age.

Leaving these general propositions for the special application, it should be said that it is true that pure literature should have a large element of the ideal,

the imaginative, the unpractical. As literature approaches the commonplace, the worldly, the technical, it loses its power. Theological books and religious writings in general are more closely connected with literature than are books of law, political science, geology, geography, ethnology, chemistry, astronomy, mathematics, etc., because theological books, even at their worst, profess to concern themselves with the unseen, instead of the seen, with the realm of faith, rather than that of observed fact or of conclusions drawn from physical phenomena. Frankly admitting that thousands of religious books belong to literature in no true sense, it is clear that the religious department of the book-making art more nearly approaches the literary domain than does any department of scientific or technical work. Religious writing is not destitute of imagination, sometimes of the loftiest kind; it often blooms into art or bursts into song; and ever, at its best, its head is among the stars, though its feet be on the earth. We know little about the future life; but to religion that life is all-important; this fact alone tends to idealize religious writing. Therefore, in American literature, as in any other, the ethical, or, indeed, the distinctly theological, division cannot be ignored.

The later American theology better than the earlier, as literature.

While it must be admitted that American literature has never produced a religious classic, or a religious book distinctly of the first class, it is clear that its religious department has made gains, which, if not commensurate with those in other divisions of intellectual progress, are yet considerable. In intellectual ability, and still more

in artistic power and skill, the names of Hooker, Cotton, Williams, the Mathers, Willard, Blair, and Hopkins, are easily surpassed by those of Channing, Hodge, Bushnell, Parker, and Brooks. Even in philosophy, I have no question that future students will rank Porter, Hopkins, or McCosh as philosophers equal to Edwards in ability, though relatively of less significance to their time. If this modest gain continue, American literature, founded by—almost upon—religious purpose, will do service to the cause of art as well as that of religion.

The theological era past, in America.

But, by no possibility, can the nineteenth century in America be called a theological era. Only when other literature stagnates, does theology, philosophy, politics, or any science come to the front. These are not natural literary leaders, for reasons too apparent to need explanation.

Theological changes.

In the original book-making part of the New World—that is, in New England—theology held undisputed sway until the middle of the eighteenth century, when, by the force of events, politics began to appear as its rival. Speeches, and resolutions, and state papers were more essential than creeds and sermons, in the colonial period between 1760 and 1790, though, of course, America was still "full of religious refugees animated by ideas which in England had lately passed out of fashion." * Then, too, the new nation, emancipated from colonial relations, grew so rapidly in numbers and material prosperity that dogmatic and controversial theology seemed relatively of small import-

* J. R. Seeley, "The Expansion of England," 297.

ance. For the first thirty years of its constitutional existence, the United States was also involved in foreign affairs, and was busy in trying to settle the relations between the federal idea and the States'-rights idea. Thus the conspicuous and apparently all-absorbing religious element appeared to pass somewhat into the background.

The Unitarian revival.

That it continued to exist, however, and that it was prized by the best Americans as the ground-work of our society and of our thought, was evident at the beginning of this century, and is evident to-day. The first twenty-five years after 1800 were made notable, in the history of American intellect, by a religious controversy that excited the New England churches, and was watched with interest by those outside of New England which did not feel its immediate force. This controversy attended the spread of the Unitarian faith in Massachusetts, particularly in its eastern section. The Congregational churches in that part of the state, and in the seaboard towns of New Hampshire and Maine, had slowly but steadily been modifying their Calvinistic and Augustinian sentiments, even before their creeds and forms were changed. Not a few ministers were regarded with suspicion as being "High-Arians," or "semi-Arians," or at any rate "Arminians"—even by the middle of the eighteenth century. Sermons had become more liberal; the minutiæ of the faith were no longer considered of equal importance with its essentials: and now and then some peculiarly "progressive" utterance gave sincere pain to the conservative party. Indeed, as far back as Chief-

Justice Sewall's day, at the close of the seventeenth century, Harvard University had been regarded as a subject for suspicion, while Yale College, established in 1700, was already deemed more conservative. In 1785 the first denominational break was made. The oldest Protestant Episcopal—or, as it was then called, "Church of England"—church in New England was King's Chapel, Boston, which, in the early days, the Puritans had feared, detested, or despised, as the case might be. This church, in 1785,* put forth a revised liturgy, prepared by James Freeman, the head of the church, in which all Trinitarian expressions were omitted. In it, as Dr. Freeman's preface stated, no Christian could find aught to offend him or wound his conscience, while "the Trinitarian, the Unitarian, the Calvinist, the Arminian, will read nothing in it which can give him any reasonable umbrage. God is the sole object of worship in these prayers; and as no man can come to God but by the one Mediator, Jesus Christ, every petition is here offered in his name, in obedience to his positive command."

But the book was certainly non-Trinitarian; and the King's Chapel society was no longer either Trinitarian or Episcopal. Young Mr. Freeman, then but twenty-six, was probably the first United States minister to *call* himself a Unitarian, though an Arian had been ordained over the Hingham Congregational Church as early as 1718. Mr. Freeman, in 1787, was re-ordained pastor of King's Chapel by the

* The year of the first Protestant Episcopal prayer-book in America; the second (present) book dates from 1789.

wardens and congregation, not at the hands of bishops. The break, as far as the single church was concerned, was complete; and a similar break was soon made in many Congregational churches.

About 1812, simultaneously with the second war between England and the United States, the theological war in Massachusetts broke out in earnest. Already the "orthodox" or "evangelical" ministers had refused to exchange pulpits with the avowed Unitarian ministers. The latter, however, strenuously retained the Congregational name, and the churches formerly Trinitarian of course continued their ancient corporate existence and congregational system. Previous to or soon after this date, nearly all of the oldest Congregational churches, established between 1620 and 1650 in such ancient towns as Boston, Cambridge, Dorchester, Dedham, Plymouth, and Salem, joined the new movement. Indeed, the Old South (Third Congregational) Church in Boston was the only prominent society in that city remaining Trinitarian. The details of the movement and of the attendant controversy, of course, cannot be chronicled here. We are chiefly interested in its literary aspects, which were of considerable importance. All New England seemed to have returned to its old-time avocation of religious pamphleteering, and there was no doubt that both sides were terribly in earnest. The most prominent leaders on the side of the conservative, or Trinitarian, Congregationalists, were Samuel Worcester, of Salem, and Professors Moses Stuart and Leonard Woods, of the theological seminary at

Its bearing upon literature.

Andover. The chief Unitarian debaters were William Ellery Channing, Boston's most famous preacher, Henry Ware, senior, Hollis professor of divinity at Harvard, Henry Ware, junior, minister of the Second Church, Boston, and Andrews Norton, professor of sacred literature at Harvard. The whole controversy had really been precipitated by the election, in 1805, of the elder Ware as divinity professor in a university and to a chair once explicitly Trinitarian in their work. The divinity school, and to a large extent the whole university, became Unitarian within the next two decades. The debate was carried on with ability, with intensity, and with as much courtesy as could be expected, in many books, in more pamphlets, in hundreds of sermons, and in such periodicals as *The Panoplist* (Trinitarian) and *The Christian Examiner* (Unitarian). Of this mass of destructive and constructive writing, but few books need now be studied. The *indirect* influence of the freedom of Unitarianism upon American literature—through such writers as Longfellow, Bryant, Lowell, Holmes, Emerson, Hawthorne, Prescott, Bancroft—will sometimes be made apparent, sometimes be but felt, in our later studies of their works.

William Ellery Channing, 1780–1842.

Of all those who, on either side, took part in the Unitarian controversy, William Ellery Channing put forth the writings most deserving of notice by the literary student. Channing was born in Newport, Rhode Island, during the Revolutionary war, graduated at Harvard when eighteen years old, and was known as a promising student at an early age, notwithstanding his slight

frame and ill-health. For his lifetime, indeed, he was virtually an invalid. At twenty-three he was a Boston minister, and before he was thirty the reputation of his finished oratory was more than local. In 1828 he attained some European reputation by his "Remarks on the Life and Character of Napoleon Bonaparte," and long before this the American Unitarians had recognized him as their head. His eloquence, and his familiarity with the political, religious, and literary questions of the day, made him much sought for on anniversary occasions, at ordinations, etc., and he spoke so often and so well that his collected writings form a sort of intellectual history of the time. If, as has been said by a living critic, American literature was born during the administration of Monroe (1817–1825), it owed much of its growth to the constant and beneficial influence of such a creator, critic, and stimulating power as Channing. As a writer, Channing seemed to produce his sentences spontaneously rather than with *labor limæ*, but his natural grace and acquired art stood him in good stead. Behind his straightforward and seemingly artless words were strength of opinion and a well-stored mind; in his own idea he was simply delivering his message and saying his say; but his hearers knew him to be eloquent. The sanctity of the rights of the individual conscience had never been so portrayed by an American divine; and in this regard he was the direct intellectual precursor of Emerson and the Transcendentalists. Preaching, to him, meant the arousing of the sense of duty to conscience, to one's own personal charac-

ter, and thus to fellow-men and to God. The peculiar stamp Channing gave to Unitarianism has not been lost. He might have declared his motto to be the words of a later thinker: "Who follows truth carries his star in his brain." His morals were intuitive; his idea of the character and possible development of man was based upon the constant thought that men are rather sons of God than worms of the dust. This idea he carried into all his writings: sermons, addresses, literary criticisms, essays, and papers on peace, anti-slavery, and temperance.

But Channing cannot be called an age-compelling force. As a religious reformer, he was no Luther, Savonarola, or Knox; he even lacked the incisive qualities which, in the cruder American period, had marked Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards. To some of his contemporaries he appeared timid; the radical wings of the Unitarians thought him altogether too conservative; and the Garrisonian Abolitionists were by no means satisfied with his methods of opposing slavery. He was serene, benign, spiritual; and sometimes the work-a-day world seemed to need a more rugged helper than he. Even in the great Unitarian controversy he was not exactly a party leader. His influence was due to the fact that the sanctity of the individual conscience was ever in his mind; and that therefore he deemed the preacher's function to announce, to collect all the facts and arguments and bring them before the hearer, who would draw his own conclusions. "Seek truth, and when found, ever follow it," he seemed to say. In his

serenity, as well as in this insistance upon the rights of the individual mind, he was, as I have said, the immediate forerunner of Emerson. From "Channing Unitarianism" to "Emersonianism" was intellectually a logical step, though the former was, and is, a conservative influence in the denomination. Channing's conclusions differed from Emerson's; their methods were in essentials the same. Channing and Emerson.

The literary influence of Channing was twofold. The intrinsic merit of his writings, which are broad in range, earnest in tone, graceful in style, and at times highly eloquent, is considerable. It is not usual for a theologian to be read half a century after death, and such has been Channing's good fortune. Yet it would be too much to call him one of the first American authors, if we limit the adjective to writers of the grade of Emerson, Hawthorne, Lowell, Longfellow, or Bryant. His work was valuable, because it was both a sign of and an influence toward, that indigenous culture which America was beginning to show. If America, between 1820 and 1840, with all her intellectual crudities and follies, was displaying something of the academic spirit and work, and some foretaste of "sweetness," some dawn of "light," she owed the boon, in considerable measure, to the fact that Channing lived and wrote. That gracious element in him which led Longfellow to exclaim: "Servant of God, well done," or Lowell to call him "good man, good angel now," fortunately influenced American literature, which in its early days had lacked the serenity that marked Channing's work. Channing and culture.

The survival of the reputation of Dr. Channing beyond the controversial period in which he lived, has been due, of course, to the literary character of his work, rather than to the prominent part he took in the development of American Unitarianism. Theological movements, however potent, do not usually leave upon literature any commensurate mark. The canons of art stand aside from those of ethics, though powerfully affected by them; and intensity of conviction, in religion, is no more sure to effect a literary result than is zeal or success in politics. American theological literature is perhaps less significant—certainly it is less original—than American political literature. New England Calvinism, while it lasted, was of course not indigenous, nor was the later New England Unitarianism, nor the American "broad church" movement in various denominations. The spirit of the country favors freedom, and therefore the various liberal movements in religion might be expected to flourish better in America than in Europe. In fact, however, there is no religious liberality in America, and no phase of religious literature, not easily paralleled in London, Oxford, Edinburgh, Paris, or Leyden. The Unitarian movement in the United States differed in extent and in literary importance, not in nature, from similar movements abroad. Different conditions produce different results; where, in one intellectual community, Calvinistic Congregationalism rules, the spirit of change takes one form; where the Church of England establishment dominates society, it takes another.

The type of conservative Unitarianism of which Channing's name is the representative, was existent and influential in biblical criticism as well as in argumentative discourse or in devout essays. Andrews Norton, while attacking the doctrine of the Trinity on scriptural grounds, defended the genuineness of the gospels in a patient and scholarly four-volume exposition. Another prominent name of the time, on the Unitarian side, was that of Orville Dewey, who bore to New York the message delivered by Channing in Boston. His creed, his method, and his intellectual and spiritual nature closely resembled those of his friend Channing, to whom in youth he had been assistant minister; but the distinctly literary ability of his sermons and other writings was less; and, unlike Channing, he was not a power in philanthropy, nor did he make his influence felt in literary criticism. Upon his thoughtful and reverent lectures on "The Problem of Human Destiny" his present literary reputation chiefly rests. But it is the misfortune (in one sense) of the minister, however earnest and able, that his books and sermons, unless of striking and significant force, or of literary ability so high as to give them a renown aside from that due to their moral mission, are not widely remembered or often read. We think of what clergymen *did*, or perhaps of what they *were*, but not of what they *are* in literature.

Andrews Norton, 1786–1853.

Orville Dewey, 1794–1882.

The same remark is true of Leonard Woods, the elder, theological professor at Andover, and one of the most strenuous opponents of the rising Unitarian-

ism. "A Reply to Dr. Ware's Letters," a "Reply to Mr. Mahan on the Doctrine of Perfection," "Lectures on the Inspiration of the Scriptures," or even "Memoirs of American Missionaries," cannot long hold their readers, after the important events that called them forth are no longer before the mind. The later reader looks respectfully upon the five-volume collection of "Woods' Works," and passes on. By the side of Dr. Woods at Andover stood a man of greater intellectual strength, Moses Stuart, also for years a theological professor, who attacked Unitarianism by biblical commentaries, by translations of German doctrinal histories, and by miscellaneous writings. Stuart, in advance of many scholars in his day, perceived that a familiarity with German critical, exegetical, and historical literature was essential to the conservative not less than to the radical. The spirituality and the discreet liberalism of Schleiermacher and other Germans of kindred mind were beginning to be used as allies by the conservative Congregationalists of New England, who, like Stuart, were not content to let "German culture" be deemed the property of Emerson or Parker alone.

Leonard Woods, 1774–1854.

Moses Stuart, 1780–1852.

A more intense spirit of attack, and a more aggressive disposition, characterized Lyman Beecher. The old conservative or "orthodox" party among the Congregationalists of New England did not lack defenders. Save in Eastern Massachusetts, and in a few towns elsewhere, it remained in possession of the field; and if Harvard University had been lost, Yale, Bowdoin, Dartmouth, Wil-

Lyman Beecher, 1775–1863.

liams, and the new Amherst continued to represent various grades of the Trinitarian Congregational faith. Yale, perhaps, was the stronghold among the colleges, at least down to the first quarter of the present century, when the quarrel between "Taylorism" and "Tylerism" reached its height; but even Yale was distrusted by the conservatives, who set up a rival and indubitably "sound" seminary on East Windsor Hill, to counteract the lax influence of the theological department in New Haven. This was after the year (1797) in which Beecher graduated at Yale. Studying theology under President Dwight, he grew strong in the faith; and when, afterwards, he was minister over a country church at Litchfield, Connecticut, his renown as a powerful orthodox preacher spread beyond the community in which he lived, and ultimately led to his removal to Boston, the Unitarian centre, that there he might carry on the controversy. His name, for the years of his Boston residence, and previous to them, was the synonym for Trinitarianism in the pulpit, as Channing's was for Unitarianism. In preaching, more than in book-making, appeared his force and fire.

Meanwhile the old Presbyterian college of New Jersey at Princeton, though not directly affected by the church secessions, the social distinctions, and the pulpit-and-pamphlet controversies of the latitude of Boston, was earnestly defending the Calvinistic creed as understood by the Reformed churches (Presbyterian, Dutch, and German) on the Continent, in England, and in the United States. Several

of its presidents or professors became influential by reason of their commentaries, or doctrinal treatises, or articles in the *Princeton Review;* but from the names of the many, two stand out in specially clear light: those of Archibald Alexander, in the first part of the nineteenth century, and Charles Hodge, in the middle of the century. Dr. Alexander was the first professor in the theological seminary at Princeton, which is not connected with the college in corporate bonds, but of course works on parallel lines. Archibald Alexander shaped and gave tone to his seminary, and to "Princeton theology,"—with its austerity of doctrine and its benignity of life,—a type in several ways different from the Puritan. Alexander's "Outlines of the Evidences of Christianity," the first of his several works, was long a favorite and a force. He and his fellows, however, were pioneers rather than creators in their theological work, so far as the ultimate crystallization of Princeton theology was concerned. They wrote much, and sometimes strongly; they taught patiently, and affected American thought, particularly in the Middle States. But it was left to Charles Hodge to produce the one American theological treatise which can be called monumental, and which, by its ability, dignity, thoroughness, and extent, worthily states an entire system of religious faith, as believed and taught by its author, and by the church or school of thought to which he belonged. No other religious work produced in this country seriously rivals it in these particulars. Other faiths have been believed as sincerely and urged as

Archibald Alexander, 1772–1851.

Charles Hodge, 1797–1878.

ably, but none has received a similarly full, systematic statement. Certainly the New England Congregationalists, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, earnestly believed in the religion which was their all-in-all, but none of them, save Samuel Willard and Samuel Hopkins, attempted to put forth a complete theological system, such as is presented in Hodge's "Systematic Theology." "Edwardsianism" and "Hopkinsianism" were names of doctrinal influences, not limited to the writings of Edwards or Hopkins. To frame a systematic theology demanded a thoroughness of theological scholarship which neither Willard, Edwards, nor Hopkins possessed. As for the Mathers, they dissipated their powers in a hundred directions, and so left no adequate support for their once great renown. Other old churches in the United States—the Protestant Episcopal, the Reformed, the Lutheran, the Moravian, the Roman Catholic—have depended upon foreign authorities in this line of work, while such great Arminian bodies as the Methodists and the Disciples of Christ have seemed to feel unwilling or unable to map out the whole "scheme of salvation," and to draw up a constitution for the government of this world and the next. Similar considerations would appear to have unconsciously influenced the Unitarians, whose doctrinal differences are almost as great as those in the Anglican churches, and who certainly have failed as completely in systematic theology, or in the whole department of the religious treatise, as they have succeeded in their influence exerted upon and through literature in general.

The better Congregational literature of the nineteenth century, since the Unitarian controversy, has differed materially from that which, on the Trinitarian side, preceded or accompanied that controversy. To the already formidable list of American *isms* and *ologies* was added, a generation ago, "Bushnellism." To most modern readers this new influence seems wholesome and sufficiently conservative; to Dr. Bushnell's neighbors on East Windsor Hill it appeared little better than the secessions of 1800–1820.

Horace Bushnell, 1802–1876.

Dr. Bushnell's "moral influence" theory of the Atonement was nothing new; it was, and is, held in substance by the great Broad Church school in the Church of England; but it did differ, undoubtedly and materially, from that formerly prevalent—and still extant—in parts of New England. Dr. Bushnell was born in Lyman Beecher's old county of Litchfield, Connecticut, but Litchfield theology was changed by his potent words. His "Vicarious Sacrifice" (1855), carefully setting forth the views which might fairly be called those of "liberal orthodoxy," powerfully affected later Congregationalism; while in this and other books he displayed a strength and freshness of thought, and a characteristic and original style, which he often applied to other than religious themes. Sometimes obscure, often quaint, and now and then unrhetorical or even ungrammatical, he always has something to say. His "Moral Uses of Dark Things" is probably to be reckoned, on the whole, his principal book, notwithstanding the interest once aroused by his "God in Christ"; "Christ in Theology"

(a defence of the previous book, made to the Hartford Central Association of Ministers, in 1849); "Views of Christian Nurture" (on revivalism); "Work and Play" (essays and addresses); "Sermons for the New Life"; "Nature and the Supernatural"; or the elaborate "Vicarious Sacrifice" treatise, previously mentioned. Bushnell the theologian was, like Robertson, Maurice, or Kingsley, in England, a genuine stimulating force upon many of the younger Congregationalists of New England; and Bushnell the essayist—now reminding one of Carlyle, now of Ruskin, but ever original—resembled Emerson, though, of course, in a small degree, in his broadcast spreading of seeds of thought. The title of "The Moral Uses of Dark Things" is a promise of the character of the chapters contained in the book. Let us take a single extract, at random, from these essays, illustrating his general style and his apt use of simple words, and also showing how he turns the very pessimism of all past history to the service of optimism:

God, for some reason, scrutable or inscrutable, has determined to let large tracts of past events be always passing into oblivion; and though it disappoints, to a certain extent, that filial instinct which unites us to the past, and puts us on the search to find, if possible, who are gone before us and what they have done, I think we shall discover uses enough, and those which are sufficiently beneficent, to comfort us in the loss. "The Moral Uses of Dark Things."

And, first of all, it will be seen that we do not lose our benefit in the past ages, because we love the remembrance of their acts and persons. Do the vegetable growths repine or sicken because they cannot remember the growths

of the previous centuries? Is it not enough that the very soil that feeds them is fertilized by the waste of so many generations mouldering in it? The principal and best fruits of the past ages come down to us, even when their names do not. If they wrought out great inventions, these will live without a history. If they unfolded great principles of society and duty, great principles do not die. If they brought their nation forward into power and a better civilization, the advances made are none the less real that their authors are forgotten. Their family spirit passed into their family, and passes down with it. Their manners and maxims and ideas flavored their children; then, after them, their children's children, and so more truly live than they would in a book. About every thing valuable in a good and great past is garnered in oblivion; not to be lost, but to be kept and made fruitful. For it is not true that we have our advantage in the past ages mainly in what we draw from their example, or gather from the mistakes of their experience. We have our benefit in what they transmit, not in what we go after and seek to copy. And passing into causes, they transmit about every thing they are; and, to a great extent, their corrections for what they are not; producing emendations probably in us, that are better than they could find how to make in themselves.

But we do not really strike the stern moral key of Providence in this general sentence of oblivion passed upon the race, till we make full account of the fact that the major part of our human history is bad in the matter of it. This, to some, will seem uncharitable, or unduly severe; but if they feel it necessary to be offended, they have only to run over the general bill of written history, and see what makes the staple matter of the record, to perceive how faithfully the stricture holds. Very few good men, and very few really great deeds figure in the record. Great wrongs, oppressions, usurpations, enmities, desolations of unholy war, persecutions of righteousness

and truth, are the chief headings of the chapters. The eminent characters are, for the most part, eminently bad, or even abominably wicked. And when the staple matter of the story is less revolting, it is generally not because there is a better mind or motive, but only because an immense cloak of hypocrisy is habitually drawn over actions, to make them less disgusting and more decent-looking than they really are. Nothing prodigiously bad is done by many, simply because of the mean, dastardly, selfish spirit which dares not heartily do the evil it thinks. In this view, as I conceive, the major part of man's history is bad—better, therefore, to be forgotten than to be remembered; pitch it down under all-merciful oblivion, and let both sight and smell of it be gone forever. We want a clean atmosphere, and there is no way to give it but to let the reeking filth and poison pass off. Even if we did not copy so many bad things cramming our memory, it would cost us incredible damage simply to be meeting and taking the look, every moment, of these bad images, whether we copy them or not. We could not be familiar with such types of evil without being fouled by them, and, therefore, God has mercifully ordained a limbo into which they may be gathered and sunk out of sight. Who could be less than a reprobate, having all the monster villainies of the past ages crowded into his memory, and compelling him to have their touch upon his feeling day and night? But as God has ordered the world, he is all the while making it morally habitable, by successive purgations. He permits us to breathe safely in permitting us to know almost nothing of the bad past. And the institution of written history does not very much vary our condition. Who of us does not remember instances of very bad and very brilliant men, who were the common talk of their times, but are now less and less frequently mentioned, and will shortly be quite forgot? Good men are not so easily forgotten; partly because they are more rare; partly because they take hold of respect, which is

firmer and more fixed than memory; and partly because their good is closer to the principle of immortality, imbibing life therefrom. Hence they stay longer, lingering as benignant stars in the sky, while the bad and wicked are mercifully doomed to make blank spaces for them, and contribute what of benefit they can by their absence. "The name of the wicked shall rot,"—this is their gospel; which, if it be wholly negative, is so far grandly salutary.

Through this whole remarkable book Bushnell shows how

> "thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs,
> And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of the suns."

The great moral use of dark things is their directing us to the Ideal:

> It is a very great thing for us morally that we shape so many ideals, for we escape, in doing it, the awfully foul tyranny of facts; *and our ideals are just as much more real than the facts, as they are better and closer to the wants of character.*

This is the word of poetry as truly as it is the word of Christianity.

While Bushnell was a stimulating—almost a creating—force in American religious thought, he had no confidence in "systematic orthodoxy," or "the possibility, in human language, of an exact theologic science." Great and awful and helpful and joyous truth must ever, in his view, be expressed in symbolic and spiritual language, not in mathematical or Athanasian. He prepared the way for some later developments in New England theology, whereby the rights of the local church were asserted against Connecticut "consociationism" in Congregational-

ism; whereby the Bible was deemed holy because of its holy message; and whereby Christian preaching was "Christocentric" rather than theologic or systematic: dealing with the person and work and teaching of Jesus Christ our Lord, rather than with particular modes of thinking about the relations between the Father, the Son, and man.

Between Horace Bushnell and Henry Ward Beecher, as representatives of later Congregationalism, there is some general similarity, but they differ in many ways. Bushnell was beloved as a preacher, and influenced his hearers; but his principal work was with his pen. Beecher, though a constant and voluminous writer, has chiefly exerted power in the pulpit or on the lecture-platform. Bushnell has stimulated ministers and the writing class; Beecher's work has principally affected separate hearers, not belonging to the literary or the ministerial set—receivers, not producers. His theological position has widely differed from that of his father, Lyman Beecher, for he has actively and constantly, from the beginning of his ministry, supported the more liberal Congregational ideas; in his later life, for instance, heartily accepting the theory of evolution, and introducing it into his religious teachings. During his whole career, until the close of the civil war and the abolition of slavery, he was an earnest Abolitionist, and in England, during the war, his speeches aided the Union cause. Possessed of an unusually and almost untiringly fertile mind, naturally eloquent, and ever a man of affairs as well as of the ministerial life, his words have been welcomed by

Henry Ward Beecher, b. 1813.

thousands, whom his enthusiasm, his original way of "putting things," and his helpful temper have benefited. For years his sermons—and at times his prayers—have been stenographically reported and published; and quick currency has been given to his political, philanthropic, and miscellaneous lectures. Written without deep or minute study, still his words are seldom crude, and sometimes are highly finished; while the thought behind them, whatever its demerits, is intense, and the thinker's own.

It seems to be certain, however, that Mr. Beecher's reputation in literature will in no way equal his contemporary renown as a speaker. Upon what could such a reputation rest? Not upon his amiable novel, "Norwood"; not upon the little essays called "Star Papers"; not upon such weightier but fragmentary works as the "Lectures to Young Men," "Life Thoughts," or "Royal Truths;" not upon his ambitious "Life of Christ," easily surpassed by Farrar's or by Geikie's, among contemporary writings. His sermons are his real literary work; and most of them, written rapidly or even extemporized, lack the literary form which printed sermons must show if they are to carry the preacher's actual work, and not his past fame, to succeeding generations. A speech or sermon, possessing fine form, may be deemed great by later generations, even if its original hearers, like Burke's, did not honor it. On the contrary, the orator or preacher, like the actor or the general, may kindle and fuse to a white heat the minds of his listeners, and yet, because he lacks the high art which shall save the printed word, he shall be more talked

of than read, more remembered than known. Mr. Beecher has deliberately adopted his method, has secured its resulting influence and fame, and would be the last to complain that a widely different success, based upon another method, was not won. Contemporary American thought has been much affected by his work; true American literature, little.

The student of religious thought in the United States, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, notes an important development later than that in which Bushnell or Beecher took part. This development may be described in the popular term, "Andover theology," which, as defined by its adherents and promoters, is simply "Progressive Orthodoxy." The object of *The Andover Review*, as explained in its prospectus, was "not controversy, but positive and constructive work in the sphere of opinion and belief. Recognizing the fact that no age can honorably refuse to face the more serious problems which confront it, there will be no hesitancy in candidly investigating and discussing the vital questions of the present." Or again, to quote from an article in the first number, entitled, "The Theological Purpose of the *Review*," the periodical and the later Andover or liberal Congregational theology sought "to revive the primitive consciousness of spiritual truth; to realize the living gospel out of which came the gospel that apostles preached; to require that ecclesiastical confessions and dogmas and all theological creeds and systems prove themselves, if they can, to be truly Apostolic

The Andover Review.

and Biblical by showing that they are genuinely Christian. This is not to set up a higher standard than Apostolic authority or Sacred Scripture. It simply requires us to understand what such phrases mean; that the letter is not the spirit, though we cannot find the spirit save by the help of the letter; that the Bible is an organism whose life is in the Incarnate Word; that Christ is the subject of Christian dogma, as well as its revealer; that all religious truth has its unity in Him. Theology is the science of God. God is revealed in Christ. The possibility, the unity, the verification of a science of divinity are given in Him, and in Him alone." Or, again, in a single noble sentence: "Christianity is essentially a *credo*, not a ceremonial, nor a cultus, nor a system of types and symbols, nor a prophecy, but a revelation through a divine revealer,—a faith, a creed."

The leading idea of the Christian working scholars of Andover—we like this expression better than "Andover theologians"—is the Christocentric idea. Christianity *is* and *lives;* its tests are present and vital tests, not merely the *ipse dixit* of a Pope or a mediæval Protestant creed-maker, or ritualism, however ancient, or "confessions of faith," however mandatory, or even the elaborate development of Messianic prophecy and the scheme of redemption. Christianity possesses its Bible, its history, its churches and ministers, its creeds and forms, and is not possessed by them; and of Christianity Christ, not any system of thinking about Christ, is the centre. This thought, though held by many in all ages, was newly and strongly emphasized by the

men at Andover, as also by an ever-increasing number of Congregationalists represented by Professor George T. Ladd of Yale, in his two-volume work on "The Doctrine of Sacred Scripture"; by many and potent "Broad Church" Episcopalians in England and the United States; by some devout Unitarians; and by others of several Christian denominational names.

This idea of Christianity has been expressed with special strength and with wide influence by Phillips Brooks, the most eminent preacher produced by the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States. That body has not lacked ministers of ability, but none has really rivalled Phillips Brooks as an effective pulpit orator, a master of English, or a spiritual force. The spirituality of Dr. Brooks' writing is its most apparent quality, marking all his sermons and other public utterances; and to this is added the power of stating truths in telling words, such as these: "There is a heaven and an earth in every man"; or in phrases like "the long day of eternity"; or in distinctions such as that which he makes between "working creeds and ultimate truth." Cannot his whole temper and life-purpose be stated in those words of his?—"The more Christ becomes simply and absolutely known, the more the missionary spirit will grow and deepen and extend, until, with the perfection of a simplified Christianity, there will at last come the conversion of the world." *

Phillips Brooks, b. 1835.

* From his address at the meeting of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Congregational), in Boston, 1885.

Turning back again to Unitarianism for a moment, mention should be made of two tendencies, both of which affected American literature, and both of which were later than the Channing-Dewey period. The first is conservative Unitarianism of the type represented by the King's Chapel liturgy (Boston), the sermons of ex-president Hill of Harvard in the First Church, Portland, and the words, during many years, of Dr. A. P. Peabody, preacher to the Harvard students. Dr. Peabody differed from a Trinitarian Congregationalist in little save terminology; and his conservative and devout lectures were acceptable when delivered in the Congregational seminary at Andover, or the Presbyterian seminary in New York. To the young men whom he so often addressed, and indeed to all who came within reach of his sermons, his message continued to emphasize Channing's idea of conscience in the soul, in such words as those uttered in one of his last baccalaureates:

Andrew Preston Peabody, b. 1811.

> Consult honestly and diligently with yourselves, and your experience will transcend your hopes. Failure will be success, and loss, gain. No man of my years, whether his fortune has been prosperous or adverse, whether he has been a good man or a bad man, if he will only say what he knows, will fail to tell you that happiness is contingent on character—that he who has this, even if he have nothing else, is as one possessing all things. May he who in an undying and infallible conscience is your true guide be with you on your whole life way, and may Jesus Christ, the incarnate law and love of God, himself the eternal life made manifest, have you on earth and in heaven for his faithful followers.

Midway between the conservative and the radical Unitarians stand such preachers and writers as James Freeman Clarke, allied to the "Channing Unitarians" by his reverential spirit and non-iconoclastic temper, and yet willing to study and to get benefit from advanced and novel schools of thought, within and without his own denomination. Thus when *The North American Review* and *The Christian Examiner* (the leading Unitarian review) stood somewhat aloof from Ralph Waldo Emerson and his fellows, and from Carlyle and his influence, Dr. Clarke attended the Transcendental meetings and corresponded with the leaders of the movement. Of Clarke, Dr. Holmes says, in his "Life of Emerson": "This high-minded and brave-souled man . . . did not wait until he [Emerson] was famous to be his admirer and champion." * But in his books—"The Christian Doctrine of Forgiveness," "The Christian Doctrine of Prayer," "Steps of Belief," "Orthodoxy, its Truths and Errors," and "Common-Sense in Religion," we find a distinct Christian sentiment by no means universally prevalent in the Transcendental movement. Dr. Clarke, while sharing in most of the intellectual movements which affected New England thought after 1830, left—like another thoughtful Unitarian minister of the liberal-conservative order, Dr. Frederic Henry Hedge—no original, formative literary work of the first class, his labor having been chiefly in the constant exercise of preaching. Clarke's "Ten Great

James Freeman Clarke, b. 1810.

* "Life of Emerson," p. 353.

Religions" (two series), though interesting, is rather an industrious gleaning in previously tilled fields, than a force such as one feels at first-hand in Max Müller's lectures on comparative religion.

Of all the later Unitarian liberals—represented by such men as William Rounseville Alger, author of "A Critical History of the Doctrine of the Future Life," or John Weiss, who wrote a set of essays entitled "American Religion"—the prototype was, of course, Theodore Parker.* After the days of Channing and Lyman Beecher, and before the time of Phillips Brooks, Parker was decidedly the most conspicuous of the Boston preachers. A radical of radicals, the man from whom the name "Parkerite Unitarians" was derived, he was yet, within the limits of his faith, of an intensely devout nature. Working, for the most part, outside of denominational lines, and indeed refused admission to many Unitarian pulpits, as far as his theism was concerned he would have been regarded, by the agnostics of the next generation, as a reactionary. Parker's sense of the personality and the loving fathership of God, of his ever-immanent power in his universe, of his direct

Theodore Parker, 1810–1860.

* The best (English) edition of Parker's collected works is edited by Francis Power Cobbe, and contains, in fourteen volumes, his "theological, polemical, and critical writings, sermons, speeches and addresses, and literary miscellanies." The order is as follows: Vol. 1, "A Discourse of Religion." Vol. 2, "Ten Sermons, and Prayers." Vol. 3, "Discourse of Theology." Vol. 4, "Discourse of Politics." Vols. 5 and 6, "Discourses of Slavery." Vol. 7, "Discourses of Social Science." Vol. 8, "Miscellaneous Discourses." Vols. 9 and 10, "Critical and Miscellaneous Writings." Vol. 11, "Theism, Atheism, and Popular Theology." Vol. 12, "Autobiographical and Miscellaneous Pieces." Vol. 13, "Historic Americans." Vol. 14, "Lessons from the World of Matter and the World of Man."

message to the soul of his creature, and of the tender love which should go out from man to his Maker, as it ever descends from Divinity to man, was of Hebraic character. As minister of the "Twenty-eighth Congregational Society," Boston, which worshipped in the large Music Hall, Parker proved himself an eloquent preacher, and notwithstanding the heterogeneous character of his congregation, the personal esteem and affection which he aroused made him a pastor in the old-fashioned sense of the word. His sermons discussed many questions affecting the relations of Christianity to its own subdivisions, and to the world. Abolitionism and various social reforms found in him an ardent champion; he constantly discussed political themes; and various literary topics he treated with ability. At least one of his miscellaneous works—"Historic Americans"—seems likely to live; and a similar good fortune may possibly attend his "Lessons from the World of Matter and the World of Man." Parker was an omnivorous reader, and studied tirelessly a great many languages; but his native and alert critical powers were never greatly aided by his broad but not deep studies. Like Beecher of Brooklyn, Parker preached, and let his stimulating words fall upon what ears they might. The progress of liberal thought in Boston was greatly aided by him, and Boston political conservatism was correspondingly weakened. To sum up his work, it may be said that it was a work of intensely aggressive theism, moving partly on Christian lines, toward religious and civil changes.

His theism, in its character and force, is best illustrated in his volume of printed prayers—the only noteworthy contribution ever made in America to this once prominent department of literature. Parker was the last of the preachers whose words and works have had any general effect on American thought, in so far as that thought has concerned itself with movements associated with individual names. Parker was at times superficial, sensational, noisy, and indiscreet; but for mere discretion and prudence he had small liking, while his uproarious method of attack he deemed necessary, in his endeavor to overthrow ancient evils. His superficiality was due to his boundless energy, which prematurely wore out his life, and to his desire to absorb all knowledge. But, after all, he was a characteristic American figure; and his position in the religion and politics of discreetly liberal Boston, before the war, is half pathetic, half comic. Of him Lowell wrote, in kindly humor:

"There he stands, looking more like a ploughman than priest,
If not dreadfully awkward, not graceful at least,
His gestures all downright and same, if you will,
As of brown-fisted Hobnail in hoeing a drill,
But his periods fall on you, stroke after stroke,
Like the blows of a lumberer felling an oak.
You forget the man wholly, you 're thankful to meet
With a preacher who smacks of the field and the street,
And to hear, you 're not over-particular whence,
Almost Taylor's profusion, quite Latimer's sense." *

In considering the earlier development of phil-

* "A Fable for Critics."

osophy in America, it has been seen that the chief purpose of its study was to support certain systems of theology. Few philosophical students in the United States have started *de novo* to examine the nature and processes of mind, without reference to any particular religious system. Honest and able thinkers there have been, free from any avowed or consciously held purpose to enslave thought, but still it remains true that theology, not philosophy, has usually been the mistress. It has been more common to defend religion *by* philosophy, than to find religion *in* philosophy. Therefore American work in this department has not been original, though nowhere else have existing principles of intellectual, religious, and political freedom been more successfully applied to the circumstances of life. American philosophical study has been content to utilize rather than to originate. The study of German philosophy has followed, in America, that of Scotch and English philosophy, and Kant and Hegel have strengthened the idealism first made known in America by Coleridge. Platonism, from Bishop Berkeley to Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Concord School of Philosophy, has found a ready welcome west of the Atlantic. American students are now little inclined to follow Edwards in the endeavor to prop up Calvinistic theology by philosophical supports; but religion has gained because Hegelianism and Platonism, as interpreted in America, have established or strengthened a genuine theism and optimism.

Philosophy in America.

Remembering, therefore, that many useful books have been produced by numerous American ministers, professors, and private students, but regarding the possession of some original quality as of paramount importance in our present notice of the comparatively slight achievements of philosophy in the New World, only a few names separate themselves from a large number.*

Laurens Perseus Hickok, b. 1798.

One of the first American students of philosophy to pursue investigations beyond the usual point was Dr. L. P. Hickok, whose books contain a strong element of originality. Hickok has been, to a limited extent, the founder of a school of thought. His work has been that of a teacher in college or theological seminary, and president of Union College, but in his writings the usual distinctly theological purpose has been minimized. He has studied speculative philosophy for its own sake. The subdivisions of his investigations are indicated by the titles of his works: "Rational Psychology," "Empirical Psychology," "Rational Cosmology," "Creator and Creation; or, The Knowledge in the Reason of God and His Work," "Humanity Immortal; or, Man Tried, Fallen, and Redeemed," and, finally and chiefly, "The Logic of Reason." His thoughts and methods, though deeply influenced by Kant, are largely original, and so undoubtedly is his peculiar, intri-

* It is not necessary, whatever their useful work, to trace how James Marsh followed Kant or Coleridge, or Thomas C. Upham Dugald Stewart, or Francis Wayland Thomas Reid, etc. The popularization of Kantian and Coleridgean speculation, through Marsh and others, was the most important work done in these transmissions of European philosophy.

cate, and sometimes almost unintelligible, English style.* Philosophy is an abstruse subject, but not a few philosophers have written "sun-clear statements"; of such writers, Dr. Hickok is not one. The leading endeavor of most of his books has been, in the words of his most energetic follower and able expounder, President Julius H. Seelye, of Amherst College, to set forth "the necessary distinctions in the intellectual functions of the sense, the understanding, and the reason." This is, of course, the Kantian endeavor. Hickok has done more than any other man to spread Kantianism in America, and his influence—directly, and through his followers, Dr. Seelye and President John Bascom of Wisconsin University—has probably been greater than that of any other American writer in this department of thought. Hickok's theology becomes theistic and supernatural by the following steps: the sense observes external facts, the understanding systematizes observations and draws the more obvious conclusions from them, and the reason seeks and finds remoter and grander causes of these noted and arranged effects. Thus Hickok reaches, by philosophy, somewhat the same result that Agassiz reached by science: "I find it impossible to attribute biological phenomena, which have been, and still are, going on upon the surface of the globe, to the simple action of physical forces. I believe they are due, in their entirety, as well as individually, to the direct intervention of a creative

* "Défiez-vous, dans les livres métaphysiques, des mots qui n'ont pu être introduits dans le monde, et ne sont propres qu'à former une langue à part."—Joubert, "Pensées."

power, acting freely, and in an autonomic way."* Hickok also finds in the individuality of the mind, and in the power of reason to investigate its own nature, and to regulate its own acts, the secret of man's superiority to other created things, and man's struggle upward toward good and God.

Mark Hopkins, b. 1802.

The numerous writings of the well-known head of another American college, President Mark Hopkins of Williams, differ materially from those of Dr. Hickok in the matter of style. If Hickok is obscure and knotty, Hopkins is almost invariably clear and attractive. In Hopkins' books: "Evidences of Christianity," "Moral Science," "The Law of Love, and Love as a Law," "An Outline Study of Man; or, The Body and Mind in one System," "The Scriptural Idea of Man," the ethical purpose is more obvious, and earlier avowed than in those of Hickok; but Hopkins seeks to reduce mere assumptions to a minimum, and not to allow theory to lose sight of proof. In his writings, we find traces of the influence of Kant, an influence not unfelt by any later American philosopher. Hopkins denies what Hamilton asserts: that by faith we "apprehend that which is beyond our knowledge," but holds with Kant, in opposition to Reid, that we have intuitive knowledge, direct knowledge, of invisible and supersensible things. Through and through Hopkins is a transcendentalist and anti-agnostic. His teachings illustrate the yielding, in America, of Reid and "common-sense"

* Agassiz to Professor A. Sedgwick, June, 1845; "Life and Correspondence of Agassiz," i., 389.

philosophy to the influence of Germany and spiritual intuitions. In Hopkins, a Trinitarian Congregational minister, in many ways a conservative, and sometimes following the Edwardsian statements, appears an optimism not less serene than that of Emerson himself. In an essay on this very theme, which in some ways restates the author's whole position and life-work, Dr. Hopkins says:

There have been those who have stood under the starry heavens, and in contrasting the immensity of the universe as revealed by modern science with the earth, as a mere speck, and with man, in his brief day upon it, have felt that the great doctrines of the incarnation, and of redemption by the Son of God, could not be true. The impression is natural, and at times overwhelming, and yet it is but an impression. Seen in its true light, the very significance of the earth and the low rank of man are the indispensable condition for the fullest display of the divine attributes, and so, for that is the same thing, of the divine glory. Nor, in the light of modern science, is the obscurity of this earth, and the apparent insignificance of what takes place upon it, any bar to its fullest publicity in the remotest world in space, if so be that intelligent beings dwell there. When science says, as it does, that the action of gravitation is instantaneous throughout space, it shuts the mouth of incredulity when we assert a possible sympathy and unity of a higher kind in the intelligent universe of God.

Knowing, then, that God could not be better than he is; that the love revealed in Christ could not be greater than it is; that the heaven provided for those who love God could not be more blessed than it is; finding in the Scriptures as much of optimism as we had a right to expect; finding also in them a revelation of a future which gives a possible key to the fearful perplexities of the pres-

ent state, we welcome each gleam of light, and wait with patience and hope the coming of that perfect day of "the restitution of all things of which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." In the coming of such a day, thus revealed, we find that solution of the mystery of the present state for which our whole nature cries out. Is it the true solution? If not, there is no solution; and if there be no solution, and man is never to find a reality that shall correspond with his highest ideal, we must have, at the point of failure, the grating and wail of a hopeless and an eternal dissonance in the creation of God.*

Into this gracious and winsome statement of faith has Edwardsianism changed in New England—the *ism* whose founder once said: "The God that holds you sinners over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you . . . he will crush you under his feet without mercy; he will crush out your blood, and make it fly, and it shall be sprinkled on his garments, so as to stain all his raiment." †

Philosophical writing (rather than what is called philosophical speculation) has been, for some reason, a favorite avocation of American college presidents. Edwards was president of the College of New Jersey; Hickok and Hopkins were the heads of Union College and Williams College; and, books on philosophy have also been produced by Noah Porter, president of Yale, and James McCosh, a successor of Edwards at Princeton. Dr.

* *Andover Review*, March, 1885; pp. 209, 210.

† Edwards' Works, vii., 170, 173.

Porter's principal work, "The Human Intellect," appeared in 1868, when the author had been professor of philosophy at Yale for twenty-two years. This book, since revised and accompanied by an abridgment, represents the author's mature philosophical system, after a life-long study of ancient and contemporary philosophy. It is both a text-book, in its statement of general principles, and a treatise for scholars, in its amplifications and more detailed arguments. Of large bulk, its style is nevertheless didactic and terse rather than diffuse; it is a collection of philosophical dicta, not a continuous essay or amalgamated and unified treatise. It comprehends within its covers a general history of philosophy, and the definitions and statements formulated by the leading thinkers of the world. Dr. Porter is influenced by German terminology, to some extent, but in his original work chiefly follows the methods of Scotch philosophy. "Common-sense" and "self-consciousness" are taking words, but sometimes lead, even in his pages, to undue self-analysis or to a heightened idea of one's own philosophical insight; and perhaps tend, by their lack of ideality, to ultimate materialism, or at least to a limited and earthly philosophy. But Dr. Porter is himself highly and truly theistic and spiritual, as most of the Scotch thinkers have been, within their somewhat narrow sphere; but certain of his—and their —postulates are not to be followed too far, without detriment to the cause they seek to serve. The leaders may be devout, may mingle theology and

Noah Porter, b. 1811.

philosophy so that they seem one; but, in very truth, there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in the "common-sense" philosophy. To be, to do, and to see, and to note one's being, doing, and seeing, does not necessarily involve a knowledge of the philosophy of existence. But Dr. Porter recognizes that many—indeed, the highest—things are learned by self-evident intuitions: and that, as far as externals go, the existence of caused things demands the existence and eternal work of a First Cause. Scotch "common-sense" was invented as an antidote to mere materialistic thinking; the "common-sense" of Reid, or the "regulative faculty" of Hamilton, meant the power of the mind to arrange and assign its ideas, toward high relations and causes. Porter's "intuition," like Trendelenburg's, goes much farther than this, in the Kantian direction; and his doctrine of Final Causes, declaring the notion of design to be strictly *a priori*, is almost thoroughly idealistic.

James McCosh, b. 1811.

It is a debatable question whether the name of President McCosh of Princeton ought to be assigned to American literature or to British. He was fifty-seven years of age when he came to the United States, and his reputation was well established. A native of Scotland, and influenced by the tone of his old universities at Edinburgh and Glasgow, he naturally became an exponent of Scotch philosophy. Sir William Hamilton directly and personally influenced him, and his first book, "The Methods of the Divine

Government, Physical and Moral," extended the Hamiltonian principles to the domain of theology, in the religio-philosophical way so familiar in Great Britain and America, where philosophy is chiefly studied and taught by ministers. McCosh's "Intuitions of the Mind Inductively Investigated"; his elaborate examination of John Stuart Mill's philosophy; his "Christianity and Positivism"; his "Laws of Discursive Thought," and his thorough review and restatement of "The Scottish Philosophy" (biographical, expository, and critical, from Hutcheson to Hamilton), show his vigor of mind and ability of utterance. He defends the Scottish philosophy, and attacks its opponents, in active controversial fashion, in large books like the above, in series of pamphlets, and in special addresses or review articles. His work has been that of an earnest defender of a general philosophical system, after the days of its greatest popularity, and in a new land. In certain particulars, as in remanding the question of evolution to the scientists, instead of trying, like Seelye, to refute it by philosophical methods, McCosh has been individual. That the fundamental truths of religion and the basal principles of philosophy are to be affected by purely physical investigations, he strenuously and effectively denies. While criticising Kant and other philosophers on comparatively minor points, his heaviest blows are reserved for Mill and Spencer, whom he attacks both on philosophical grounds and on religious. But times and men change: McCosh has lived to see Spencer

deemed a reactionary and conservative by Frederic Harrison, the leading English positivist; while John Fiske, the foremost American Spencerian, has applied, as we shall see, Spencerianism and Darwinism to the defence of theism and personal immortality.

Philosophical study in America had so far progressed, in 1867, as to lead to the establishment of a *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, which has since been continuously published. Its first and only editor has been William T. Harris, formerly school superintendent in St. Louis, and afterwards a resident of Concord, Massachusetts, and an active supporter of the Emersonian summer school of philosophy, in that town. The periodical has for its motto these words of Novalis: "Philosophy can bake no bread, but she can procure for us God, freedom, and immortality," and it has fairly exemplified the ground-principle thus laid down. Its philosophic range has been wide, and contributors of diverse schools of thought have been admitted. Besides purely mental questions, it has discussed related topics, such as the physiological concomitants of thought, and has entered into speculative investigations of the properties of matter. It has deeply studied music and painting. It has endeavored to turn American thought from a too exclusive reverence for the old Scotch standards, or for Comte, Spencer, and Mill, to more spiritual thinkers, such as Plato, Hegel, or Schelling. The aim of its editor has been not only to afford American philosophers a medium

William Torrey Harris, b. 1835.

for communication, but also to develop American thought and to make it more universal, less provincial. "After all," says Dr. Harris, "it is not 'American thought' so much as American thinkers that we want. To think in the highest sense is to transcend all natural limits—such, for example, as national peculiarities, defects in culture, distinctions in race, habits, and modes of living,—to be universal, so that one can dissolve away the external hull and seize the substance itself. The peculiarities stand in the way; were it not for these we should find Greek or German philosophy just the forms we ourselves need. Our province as Americans is to rise to purer forms than have hitherto been attained, and thus speak a 'solvent word' of more potency than those already uttered. If this be the goal we aim at, it is evident that we can find no other means so well adapted to rid us of our own idiosyncrasies as the study of the greatest thinkers of all ages and all times."

In this line has been the chief service of *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy.* Most of its contributors have not been men or women of eminence; the merit of its articles has varied greatly; and its range has been so broad as to make one wonder, occasionally, what is its principle of inclusion and exclusion. It seems like a cross between a German philosophical-seminary report and the old *Dial* of the Transcendentalists of 1840. But it has deepened and broadened American thought, it has incidentally aided literary and æsthetic criticism, and it has aided in the increas-

ingly successful attack on materialistic or utilitarian systems, which, one might have feared, would become more influential in America than they ever have done. It has maintained that the "essentials of human nature," the "nature of first principles" in the world, are soluble. It has, it thinks, found and demonstrated God, freedom, immortality, as mentioned in its Novalis motto. To quote once more the confident words of its editor:

A sacred college of agnostics that should undertake to place on its Index Prohibitory any or all questions relating to God, freedom, or immortality, must base its action either on the fact that its limited investigation has hitherto been unsuccessful in finding a solution, or on the fact that its investigation has discovered necessary limits in the nature of human knowledge. The mere fact of such a want of success on the part of the agnostic does not justify him in pronouncing any thing either unknown or unknowable. It warrants only the modest attitude of the sceptic who affirms his own present ignorance. What man has a right to affirm besides his own ignorance the ignorance of all men? An affirmation of necessary ignorance is still more unwarranted. Modern agnosticism rests chiefly on metaphysical grounds which profess to have discovered the inherent incommensurableness of the infinite or absolute with human capacity for cognition. Such discovery implies acquirements in ontology, a knowledge of the nature of the infinite and absolute, for purposes of comparison, that are utterly destructive of the agnostic hypothesis. The worst possible basis for agnosticism is the metaphysical one. But if the metaphysical basis is removed, there is left only the simple individual fact that such and such gentlemen have not succeeded thus far with the efforts that they have chosen to make in reaching certitude regarding freedom, immortality, etc.

To individual cases of doubt and uncertainty it is possible to oppose other individual cases of knowledge and certainty. Doubt and knowledge, however, are alike uninstructive to the one who does not investigate the occasion of the doubt or verify the supposed knowledge for himself.

It is too soon to estimate critically, or with any attempt at final judgment, the writings of John Fiske, a man whose maturest work, perhaps, yet remains to be done. But notwithstanding the undesirableness of the discussion, in these pages, of many names like his own, our record of the short and comparatively unimportant list of American philosophical writings would be incomplete without a glance, if no more, at two or three of Fiske's books. His lectures on American history, his studies in folk-lore, his writings on Darwinism, education, and miscellaneous topics, may well be passed by, to be estimated more accurately in future years. But the trend of his distinctly philosophical work, which includes careful consideration of much-discussed contemporary writing in physics, physiology, and ethnology, is such as to call for notice here. Fiske is the chief American Spencerian. His two-volume work called "Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy" presents Herbert Spencer's system, in its nature and tendency, with a fulness and clearness hardly to be matched, so far as the reader's convenience is concerned, in the more elaborate writings of Spencer himself. It also contains much original matter, which, in the departments of psychology and sociology, partly anticipated some of Spencer's later work. Fiske

John Fiske, b. 1842.

followed Spencer in vigorous destructive criticism of the "Positive Philosophy," that preposterous compound of atheism and Romanism. Indeed, he claims that, by Spencer and his fellow-workers, "a system of philosophy has been constructed, out of purely scientific materials and by the employment of scientific methods, which opposes a direct negative to every one of the theorems of which Positivism is made up." Again: "Mr. Spencer's philosophy is . . . a system which, without making appeal to data that are ontological or to agencies that are extra-cosmic, brings all known truths concerning the coexistence and succession of phenomena into relation with one another as the corollaries of a single primordial truth, which is alleged of the omnipresent Existence (ignored by Positivism) whereof the phenomenal world is the multiform manifestation."

These utterances are in the preface to "Cosmic Philosophy,"—utterances followed by such similar statements as: "The hostility between Science and Religion, about which so much is talked and written, is purely a chimera of imagination. Putting the case into other language, it may be said that to assert a radical hostility between our Knowledge and our Aspirations, is to postulate such a fundamental viciousness in the constitution of things, as the evolutionist, at least, is in no wise bound to acknowledge. . . . That Faith which makes the innermost essence of religion is indestructible. Were it not for the steadfast conviction that this is so, what could sustain us in dealing with questions

so mighty and so awful that one is sometimes fain to shrink from facing their full import, lest the mind be overwhelmed and forever paralyzed by the sense of its own nothingness."

Mr. Fiske wrote thus in 1874, and the several chapters of his work elaborated these positions, among many others. In 1884 and 1885 appeared the two other books to be mentioned here: "The Destiny of Man, Viewed in the Light of his Origin"; and "The Idea of God as Affected by Modern Knowledge." In the former the author applied the evolutionist's arguments, in which he implicitly believes, to the proof of personal immortality. The book was first delivered as lectures in that curious heterogeneous compound of wisdom and eccentricity, the Concord Summer School of Philosophy. The argument is: that man is and must remain the highest product of evolution on earth; that the brain and its powers were evolved preponderatingly; and that with the increased strength of the brain came spirituality and morals, to gain until "peace and love shall reign supreme. The dream of poets, the lesson of priest and prophet, the inspiration of the great musician, is confirmed in the light of modern knowledge. And as we gird ourselves up for the work of life, we may look forward to the time when in the truest sense the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords." In the latter book Mr. Fiske follows the line of discussion further, and applies it to questions of theism in gen-

eral, and the regulation of the universe. He rejects the Augustinian, Calvinistic, or other united and accurately-defined doctrines of God's existence, and finds that the immanence of the Great Cause is like the Force of the physicists. The mind of man, with its developed moral nature, mirrors and leads to the vastly different but similar mind of God, of which it is a type. Evolution and destiny, as viewed by Mr. Fiske, are the real thing of which foreordination and a scheme of salvation were imperfect definitions.

Since 1870 or 1880, in America, there has been a marked increase of strength of theistic and spiritual belief and argument, among scientific men, students of philosophy, religious "radicals," and others. It is true that "orthodoxy" or "evangelicalism" has not included any increased number of high intellects within its pale. Contemporary American literature and thought is, to a considerable extent, outside of the limits of the Trinitarian bodies, and not to be accounted orthodox by Roman Catholic, "High Church," Calvinistic, or "Reformed" standards. It is not hostile to Christianity; to the principles of its Founder it is, for the most part, sincerely attached; it complains of no priestcraft, which, in America, has so little power over the best mind that it is not even, as in France to Victor Hugo, an aggravation; it complains now of no overbearing clerical conservatism, it simply lets modern denominations do their work, accepting what is good and permanent, and ignoring what it deems transient. But, on the other hand, material-

ism has scarcely any hold upon it. Not one American book of the first class has ever been written by an atheist or denier of immortality. The very poet accepted as the incarnation of extreme "Americanism"—Walt Whitman—accepts both theism and the doctrine of the future life. The detail-maps of heaven and hell, once owned by the popes and the Mathers, have become antiquated, and the pass-words are half-forgotten, but American thought remains loyal to "God, freedom, and immortality."

CHAPTER IX.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1803–1882.

In the strictest estimate of the amount and value of the intellectual product of America, the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson is entitled to thorough and respectful consideration. Who was the man, and what did he do? What was the purpose, and what the achievement, of the spoken and written words by which his message was given to the world?

Emerson was a descendant of a long line of New England ministers, representing the stern democratic aristocracy of Massachusetts—an aristocracy dependent only upon brain and achievement, and upon the respect bestowed upon the minister in the Congregational churches. "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate" was the command heeded by the English Puritans and Independents in the seventeenth century, as against the supporters of prelacy and kingcraft. The same non-conformist pulse beat in the veins of Emerson, under new skies and in new days. The founders of New England were Protestants and Independents; they protested against assumptions unwarranted, as they believed, by Scrip-

ture, and they were independent of those who assumed to control their theocratic commonwealth. Emerson, in the nineteenth century, protested against conventionality and sham in the churches, in society, and in the State; and he stood independent of public sentiment and the domination of the majority. He was a reformer among reformers; he spoke his word and wrote his line, content to bide his time and let the utterance find its hearer or reader. Condemned and hated by many, he lived in the serenest optimism. His method was that of the seer, rather than that of the inductive philosopher; he outspoke, and left the result with others. Measured by the standards of "orthodoxy," whether Roman, Episcopal, Presbyterian, or old-time Congregational, he was a heretic and a destroyer. But in the great age-conflict between materialism and idealism, he was an idealist through and through. He fought no battles for prelacy, for the Westminster Confession, or the Trinity; but as against atheism, pessimism, and utilitarianism, he was an ally of Christianity. Inwardly, what was his philosophy? Hear it concisely stated in his own words to his friend Carlyle: "My whole philosophy, which is very real, teaches acquiescence and optimism." What were his aim and his success in outward teaching? To impart and to make sacred the idea of intellectual independence.

Emerson's philosophy.

The downfall of the classical school in English poetry, which so deeply influenced the literature of the world, was but a single element in a great

change which affected many nations. From Pope to Wordsworth, from Thomson to Shelley, the English mind suffered many and significant modifications. Realism, naturalism, simplicity, and romanticism succeeded artificiality, preciseness, and classicism in spirit and form. The most powerful influence, however, that made English literature between 1800 and 1825 more commanding than English literature between 1750 and 1775, was the new interest in Man in the Universe, his origin, character, possibilities, and ultimate destiny. This interest was felt in many lands besides the British isles. In Germany the force exerted by Goethe powerfully affected all his contemporaries, and more than any thing else gave German literature that high position which it had shamefully lacked for so long. The mind of new Germany was studied in England by Coleridge and some of the less insular scholars; and Goethe, in particular, impressed upon Carlyle those characteristics which had moulded so many of Goethe's own countrymen. Richter's influence upon Carlyle was also marked; and Sterne had in some ways influenced Richter. Of Carlyle's originality and native force there can be no question, but he absorbed and utilized German thought in such ways as to make it useful to his English and Scotch fellows—to many of whom it came as a revelation.

Nineteenth-century changes in literature.

Between Carlyle and Emerson there were, as we shall see, many and grave differences; it is as idle to call Emerson a "follower" of Carlyle as to call Carlyle a disciple of Emerson. But the work done

by Emerson in America was decidedly similar to that of Carlyle in Edinburgh, Oxford, and London. Emancipation and freedom were less needed in America than in Germany, Scotland, or England. Political freedom had been attained here; social and intellectual bans were less forbidding on the western shore of the Atlantic than on the eastern. As for a "classical" school in literature, we had scarcely any literature at all when Emerson began to write, certainly none from whose shackles we needed to be set free. Nevertheless, the freer thought of the nineteenth century had a mission for the western republic itself. American society was English society, existing under different conditions, but not different in its essential nature. Our colleges were founded upon the Oxford plan, and our prevalent religious attitude was one which would now be called thoroughly conservative. Notwithstanding the intellectual freedom which had so powerfully worked on political lines, the breath of modern thought had not thoroughly been felt. The isolation of the United States postponed the effect of that newer renaissance which, at the beginning of the century, influenced England so profoundly. America had stimulated Europe at the close of the eighteenth century, first politically, then otherwise; now she was beginning to feel the effects of European currents. German transcendentalism or spiritualism in philosophy first touched the American mind through the writings of Coleridge, who had several earnest students on the western side of the Atlan-

Carlyle and Emerson.

tic. After Coleridge came Emerson, by a natural succession; and side by side with Emerson—not in advance of him—there stood for American readers Carlyle, who, though not a transcendentalist, was an idealist, a worker for righteousness, a poet. Carlyle thundered as a prophet of evil, a denouncer of wrong, a summoner to good; the force of man's will was the force on which he relied for reform; his very prejudices were intense and influential. Emerson thought upon, and revealed to his countrymen, the good; he was an optimist, a serene presence, unexcited because confident of the ultimate result. Carlyle made terrible mistakes, and showed the injustice of ignorance. Emerson, though bitterly attacked, seldom retorted and seldom swerved from his self-confident course. To the essayist of Chelsea God was a mighty avenging and rewarding force; to the essayist of Concord he was a benign spirit pervading the universe. "Thou shalt," "thou shalt not," said Carlyle; "be thyself," said Emerson.

Emerson the man.

The life of Ralph Waldo Emerson was outwardly an uneventful one. The literary man of the nineteenth century lives in no such events as those which followed Chaucer, Spenser, Marlowe, Bacon, Milton, Bunyan, or De Foe. The placid academic career of Gray was scarcely more quiet than the lives of Wordsworth in England or Emerson or Longfellow in America. The man Emerson, outside of his books and lectures, was simply a silent citizen of the country town of Concord, in which he was a successful farmer. Most

of the male ancestors of Emerson, in the direct line, were Congregational ministers in the eastern part of Massachusetts, and one of his forefathers, by an early maternal line, was Rev. Peter Bulkley, the first minister of that town of Concord with which Emerson's fame was so closely connected. This clerical ancestry, upon which Emerson somewhat prided himself, and upon which all of his biographers dwell fondly, was not a surprising thing. The Emersons were well educated, and duly sent their sons to college. The ministerial profession was the one to which college graduates naturally turned. Forty or fifty *per cent.* of Harvard's alumni became ministers in the old days. The clerical line preceding the essayist and poet means simply, in this instance, that he came from the best New England stock, accustomed for years to think and live in an atmosphere stimulating to thought. It would be an error to suppose that those nearest to Emerson in the line of descent were old-fashioned Puritans. The change in theological opinion which finally brought the Unitarian revival of 1800–1820 had begun in Eastern Massachusetts by the middle of the eighteenth century. Emerson's grandmother married, as her second husband, Rev. Dr. Ezra Ripley, senior minister of the Concord church after the Unitarian change; and Rev. William Emerson, father of Ralph Waldo, was minister of the First Church in Boston until his death in 1811. The First Church was historically the most prominent religious organization in the town, and William Emerson seems to have had that grace of manner and

quiet eloquence which afterward appeared in his son. In his time he was deemed a radical, but a tolerant one; a good man, but not a very able or vigorous one. His wife was Ruth Haskins, of Boston, a woman of whom many kind things are said, and who may be described as a New England mother. The "hereditary genius" of Emerson, like that of Longfellow, Holmes, or Lowell, simply promised that he would be an intelligent man, somewhat better educated and somewhat more liberal than his predecessors, and a New Englander in mental habit. That which was to come afterward must depend upon individual taste and effort.

Emerson was born almost at the beginning of the century, in Boston, May 25, 1803, during his father's pastorate over the First Church. At that time, and during the period of Emerson's school and college days, literature in Boston was springing into leaf and flower. After theological productiveness lessened in Massachusetts, miscellaneous literature, such as it was, flourished more vigorously in Connecticut, New York, and Pennsylvania than on Massachusetts Bay; but no long time elapsed before the Bostonians took up their pens with a new and more distinctly literary purpose. The Unitarian ministers were paying considerable attention to the art of style, and a culture which was to be described by no more complimentary epithet than "genial," was slowly developing in the society of the town, and of the neighboring Cambridge. Finally appeared *The Monthly Anthology*, which

was something better than a college literary magazine. Rev. William Emerson edited it for a time, and gathered into its pages whatever literary ability he could summon to his aid. The Boston Athenæum's library and art collection were also begun; Boston gentlemen were beginning to meet in societies and elsewhere, and were striving, in several ways, to promote literature and culture. In all these other movements William Emerson took an active part. By the time Ralph Waldo Emerson graduated at Harvard, he had heard Daniel Webster plead, and Channing preach, studied Greek under Edward Everett and modern languages under George Ticknor, and read *The North American Review* (virtually the improved successor of *The Monthly Anthology*) for several years. In college he was a great reader, and an occasional writer in prose and verse. Some of his college companions—William Henry Furness, George Ripley, Charles Wentworth Upham—felt the same new stimulus at Harvard, under the English instruction of Edward Tyrrel Channing, and afterward attained some note as writers. Ripley and Furness, too, were to become "reformers" in the approaching days of religio-philosophical simmer. Elsewhere, Bryant, the elder Dana, Washington Allston, Charles Sprague, Joseph Rodman Drake, Fitz-Greene Halleck, James Gates Percival, and Irving were beginning to be known; clearly the dawn had come, but there was no precursor of Emerson.

Emerson's youth.

After a period of school-teaching, for William

Emerson had left his family in narrow circumstances, Ralph Waldo Emerson, following the cleri-

Emerson the minister.

cal bent of his inherited genius, and turning to the profession which was still the most tempting field for a New England mind, studied at the Cambridge divinity school, and entered the Unitarian ministry. At that time Unitarianism, though held in abhorrence in other parts of the country, was socially and intellectually paramount in the vicinity of Boston. The theology of Channing was prevalent. Emerson, though he began to study under Channing's supervision, was even in youth somewhat inclined to radicalism ; but even as a radical he was not an early force, for neither his collegiate nor his theological studies gave special promise of future distinction. His first clerical opportunity, after finishing his work as a divinity student, was a very favorable one. In 1829, when a little less than twenty-six years old, he was ordained and installed as colleague pastor of the old Second Church in Boston, of which the senior pastor was the elder Henry Ware. Before long, by Dr. Ware's resignation, young Emerson became sole minister of one of the more prominent churches of the New England metropolis. His four years' career as a Boston preacher appears to have been fairly successful, but not brilliant. He was an anti-slavery reformer, was interested in the school affairs of Boston, and served for a time as chaplain to the State Senate. During this pastorate he was married, and his wife died. In 1832 occurred that event which ended Emerson's minis-

terial life, made him notorious among the churches, and redounds little to his credit, on any theory. On Sunday, September 9, 1832, after much deliberation, and after conference with the church leaders, he preached a sermon in which he declared his opinion that the Lord's Supper was never intended to be a permanent rite; that the Primitive Church made some mistakes; that "the use of the elements, however suitable to the people and the modes of thought in the East, where it originated, is foreign and unsuited to affect us"; that Christ himself cared nothing for forms, and we ought not to insist on a formal commemoration of his work; and that, in short, "the day of formal religion is past." He went on to state that he had "no hostility to this institution," did not wish to obtrude his own opinion, and would rejoice in all the good it might produce, but could not longer administer the communion. Therefore, as the church thought the celebration of the communion part of a minister's duty, he resigned.

This act of Mr. Emerson's has been magnified by some of his admirers into an example of the greatest heroism, which others ought to follow. That Emerson was honest in it there is no reason to doubt; but that he was a hero or a martyr does not follow. When a Christian minister cannot observe a simple and mandatory form of the religion established by the founder of Christianity, it is quite time for him to withdraw. Every intelligent person will now admit that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life"; that Christianity was designed to be a non-

ritualistic religion of the soul, and that it may exist in its spiritual purity, as among the Friends, even without those few external things which Christ commanded. But every one also knows that the communion service, rightly observed, has no injurious ritualistic effect, but is high and helpful in the religious life. If Emerson thought Christ merely a man, why could he not eat bread and drink wine in affectionate remembrance of the body broken and the blood spilt for humanity? But it is enough to say that this affair had little injurious effect upon the Unitarian churches, simply terminating a pastorate of no more than average success, and turning Emerson to the life-work for which he was best fitted, that of literature.

In 1833 he took a preliminary European tour, meeting a few celebrities, including Carlyle. The journey broadened his view and stored his mind, but bore no immediate fruit. On his return, not yet wholly abandoning the ministerial profession, he preached here and there, sometimes for months in succession, but his views on the communion service hindered any new settlement, if he desired one. In 1834 he took up his home in Concord, where he dwelt until his death.

Emerson in Concord.

This choice of a residence on Emerson's part was the thing which made Concord a sort of literary Mecca; for the "Concord school" of American writers, of course, looked to Emerson as its head. Nearly all of the lesser authors who have lived in Concord, from 1834 to the days of the summer meetings of the Concord School of Philoso-

phy, have gone thither not by accident nor for any other reason than the desire to be near the great essayist, and to be ranked among kindred thinkers. Hawthorne's periods of residence in Concord had nothing to do with Emerson's choice of home, and Thoreau was a native of the town ; these two must be excepted. The village is a pretty one, and the surroundings are as attractive as those of an average town in New England, though the summer season visits Concord with unusual fervor. Concord and Cambridge are the two Massachusetts towns which have drawn authors to them by the force of associations, but Cambridge is the seat of a college only three miles from Boston, while Concord is still a farming community. Emerson, therefore, alone among American authors, has been a philosopher who has drawn learners to his didactic groves. Hawthorne, during his Concord years, stood intellectually aloof from Emerson, to whom he owed nothing in particular ; Thoreau, though patronized by Emerson, was an original genius ; nearly all the others looked up to Emerson with reverential and discipular awe. Some of them have gone farther than their master, who, though sometimes eccentric, was never amusing; but all together have made Transcendentalism a force, and on the whole a decidedly beneficent force, in American thought and life.

Transcendentalism in America (as following the Coleridgean spiritualism) may be said to have begun with Emerson's appearance in the lecture field, in 1834. What was Transcendentalism? It was the

reaction from the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham; from any philosophic or materialistic doctrine which denied that the soul was self-centred. Transcendentalism averred that man knew some things not derived from cold external experience, and not connected with practical or physical advantage. Its theory of thought, and morals, and action had to do with intuitive ideas, as well as with practical acquisitions; it was thoroughly and highly idealistic. The transcendentalism of Coleridge and the transcendentalism of Emerson and the Concord writers were closely like Dr. Channing's theory of the supreme authority of conscience, and they also resembled the Friends' great doctrine of the inner light. There was, of course, nothing absolutely new in the Coleridgean and Emersonian revivals, or in the great German influence which, through Carlyle, was making such havoc with the cold and selfish part of English philosophy. Most men are idealists; the greatest thinkers of all ages have recognized the might of conscience; and all the true poets of the world have seen more in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in philosophy. But ideal truth, sublime and eternal, accepted by the thought of all ages, and of the very essence of Christianity, was in need of re-statement. A materialistic period had passed, in France, in a part of England, and in a part of the United States; and another such period was to come. Against materialism Emerson preached a spiritual, self-centred idealism. But still another element was present in all that he taught. It was the element of reverential communion with nature, and with the

Transcendentalism.

Spirit from which nature came, and under which it works. At its worst and vaguest, this spirit of Transcendentalism was akin to a loose and profitless pantheism; at its best it was a helper of the highest and truest thing in humanity, its spiritual part. Emerson was the natural follower of Goethe and Carlyle, but not less of Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Shelley. But his ethics were loftier than Goethe's; in him Carlyle's force-doctrine did not exist; and though he was less technically philosophic than Coleridge, he had a stronger power of putting philosophy into a tangible and rememberable form. His kinship with Wordsworth and Shelley was at first sight slighter; but he must be a careless reader who does not see that Wordsworth's ideas of nature as reflecting man's moods and helping his destiny are existent in Emerson, especially in his poems; and that the thought of Shelley's "Hymn to the Spirit of Nature" is an undertone, more clearly heard by the average ear, of nearly all that Emerson wrote. If Carlyle's idea of Providence was masculine and personal, Emerson's was gentler, and more impressed with the thought of the union between the "Over-Soul"—the immanent Divinity—and whatever is good in man. But as compared with Shelley's sincere and vague pantheism, the devotion and individualism of Emerson have a far more practical result. Emerson's Transcendentalism does not lose sight of the active work of the world; indeed, its whole mission is as intensely practical and personal as the mission of Carlyle's chapter called "The Everlasting Yea," or Longfellow's "Psalm of Life."

The influences which, in Emerson's own view, were effective in the revival of thought and literature at this time were Swedenborgianism; the importation of German thought by young educated Americans; the development of the sciences of astronomy and geology; phrenology; the critical tendency, promoted by the Harvard Unitarian theologians and Dr. Channing; and the writings of Goethe. This mixture illustrates the unsettled state of things at the beginning of Emerson's career; for surely Swedenborgianism and phrenology made no mark now visible upon American literature. But strong and on the whole beneficent forces were at work in that period of *ites* and *isms*, in which, as described by Emerson, the "Friends of Universal Progress" would hold conventions composed of "madmen, madwomen, men with beards, Dunkers, Muggletonians, Come-outers, Groaners, Agrarians, Seventh-day Baptists, Quakers, Abolitionists, Calvinists, Unitarians, and philosophers." Yet in these very meetings, thus quaintly variegated, were such men as Channing, Alcott, Parker, Garrison, and Jones Very; while in the first meeting of the Transcendental Club were Emerson, Alcott, Ripley, Hedge, and Freeman Clarke. "The peculiarity of all this period," says Emerson," was its return to law, to what was normal, natural, and human." And the subjects of Emerson's first lectures were from the normal, the natural, and the human, for example: The Relation of Man to the Globe; Luther; Burke; Fox; Milton; Michael Angelo. In these lectures he outlined or asserted those doctrines concerning

A time of change.

man, character, duty, life, nature, beauty, which were to be reasserted in so many subsequent lectures; essays, and poems. To Emerson, man was a being of godlike essence, bound to be erect, noble, independent, worthy of himself; character was the elaboration of the germs of the best things in the soul: duty was the acceptance and utilization of one's environment; life was an august possibility and a high obligation; nature was the mirror of deity; and beauty—

> "Tell, them, dear, if eyes were made for seeing,
> Then beauty is its own excuse for being."

Emerson had now fairly entered upon his literary career. He was lecturing in Boston every winter, on literature, history, or culture; he delivered a historical address at the two hundredth anniversary of the incorporation of the town of Concord; and he was still preaching regularly at the little Unitarian church in the neighboring village of East Lexington. He had begun his life-long correspondence with Thomas Carlyle, whose first book he introduced to American readers before its English appearance; and, best of all, he had begun to write those poems which are among the choicest achievements of American literature, and which we shall study at length in the second volume of this work. He was also known in the literary, philosophical, and "advanced" religious circles of eastern Massachusetts as an able, if somewhat eccentric, thinker. As yet, however, he could not be said to be widely known. Nor did great or wide reputation come at once with

the publication, in 1836, of that remarkable booklet, "Nature," 1836. containing a single essay on Nature, which we instinctively regard as the corner-stone of Emerson's fame. The sale of the book was small and slow; it was published anonymously; but its readers, wherever the "fit though few" were found, did not forget it. Ralph Waldo Emerson was henceforth to be a power in the movements of American thought.

This essay contains much that is beautiful in form and true in inner thought, as far as mere description goes. It is a prose-poem, not free from eccentricities or apparent obscurities. But let us not delay a moment to discuss its superficial qualities. It had a lofty purpose, a mission. Its utterances were an explicit statement of a creed denied alike by the Calvinist and the materialist. The world is lost, and under the wrath of God, says the Calvinist. The world is self-created, purposeless, and to be made the most of before we perish forever, says the materialist. Hear Emerson: "Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact." "All things are normal, and in their boundless changes have an increasing reference to spiritual nature. Every animal function, from the sponge up to Hercules, shall hint or thunder to man the laws of right and wrong, and echo the ten commandments. This ethical character so penetrates the bone and marrow of nature, as to secure the end for which it was made. Every natural process is a version of a moral sentence. The moral law lies at the centre of nature and radiates to the circumference." "Truth and goodness and beauty

are but different faces of the same All. But beauty in Nature is not ultimate. It is the herald of inward and eternal beauty." "When we come to inquire Whence is matter? and Whereto? many truths arise to us out of the recesses of consciousness. We learn that the highest is present to the soul of man, that the dread universal essence, which is not wisdom, or love, or beauty, or power, but all in one, and each entirely, is that for which all things exist, and that by which they are; that spirit creates; that behind nature, throughout nature, spirit is present; that spirit is one and not compound; that spirit does not act upon us from without, that is, in space and time, but spiritually, or through ourselves; therefore that spirit, that is, the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old." "Man is conscious of a universal soul within or behind his individual life, wherein, as in a firmament, the natures of justice, truth, love, freedom, arise and shine." "The foundations of man are not in matter, but in spirit; but the element of spirit is eternity."

And all this has a practical application to the upbuilding of the character of the individual man: "Know, then, that the world exists for you. For you is the phenomenon perfect. What we are that only can we see. All that Adam had, all that Cæsar could, you have and can do. Adam called his house heaven and earth, Cæsar called his house Rome; you, perhaps, call yours a cobbler's trade, a hundred acres of ploughed land, or a scholar's gar-

ret. Yet, line for line and point for point, your dominion is as great as theirs, though without fine names. Build, therefore, your own world. As fast as you conform your life to the pure idea in your mind, that will unfold its great proportions."

Here, then, we have Emerson's philosophy of nature, life, and development. It is profoundly ethical, ever in search of the purpose of things, optimistic, reliant upon God, strenuous for the development of the individual. It is an Anglo-Saxon philosophy, not a Greek, Roman, or Gallic philosophy. No fondness for Orientalism in Emerson, no eccentricity or obscurity, no inconsistency—and all these are found in his books,—ever swerved him from this fundamental idea of man's place in the universe.

Emerson's Anglo-Saxon philosophy.

On the last day of August, 1837, the year after the publication of "Nature," Emerson delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard an oration entitled "The American Scholar." The book had made some stir among a few thoughtful readers; the address quickened and excited many scholarly hearers. Emerson felt that the opportunity was one in which he could make a general statement of his intellectual creed, and of the principles which, in his view, should animate the thought and brain-work of America. "Let us be Americans, take new guides, and explore the present." "As the source of truth is not books, but mental activity, we are to cultivate self-trust. Help can come to us only from our own bosoms, and in ourselves we find the law of all nature, so

"The American Scholar," 1837.

that the world is nothing. We are to be units, walk on our own feet, think our own thoughts, and speak our own minds." "Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close. The millions that around us are rushing into life cannot always be fed on the sere remains of foreign harvests." "No age should humbly follow the books or intellectual customs of the preceding age; one's own view of duty should not be shadowed by other men's views." "Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon, have given, forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote these books." "Genius looks forward; the eyes of man are set in his forehead, not in his hindhead; man hopes, genius creates." "Man thinking" was Emerson's definition of the scholar, and by this he meant the whole man, not the narrow specialist—a ninth part of man—already beginning to appear. "The state of society is one in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk, and strut about so many walking monsters—a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man." Finally, "in self-trust all the virtues are comprehended. Free should the scholar be—free and brave. Free even to the definition of freedom, without any hindrance that does not arise out of his own constitution. Brave, for fear is a thing which a scholar, by his very function, puts behind him." This address, true and clear—as the so-called obscurity of the

"Nature" essay was clear to the responsive mind —was, in the words of James Russell Lowell (quoted in Holmes' "Life of Emerson," from Lowell's essay on Emerson), "an event without any former parallel in our literary annals, a scene to be always treasured in the memory for its picturesqueness and its inspiration. What crowded and breathless aisles, what windows clustering with eager heads, what enthusiasm of approval, what grim silence of foregone dissent!" Lowell was then a college senior, and surely caught some of Emerson's inspiration for his early life-work. So has many another who has read the spoken words on the printed page. Dr. Holmes quotes this statement: "A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men," and adds: "This grand oration was our intellectual Declaration of Independence. Nothing like it had been heard in the halls of Harvard since Samuel Adams supported the affirmative of the question; 'Whether it be lawful to resist the chief magistrate if the commonwealth cannot otherwise be preserved.' . . . The young men went out from it as if a prophet had been proclaiming to them: 'Thus saith the Lord!'" *

Divinity School address, 1838.

From a literary point of view, the address which Emerson delivered the next year (July, 1838) at the Harvard Divinity School was inferior to "Nature" or "The American Scholar," but it aroused an intenser theological controversy

* "Ralph Waldo Emerson," by Oliver Wendell Holmes, p. 115.

than that evoked by Emerson's sermon on the communion service. The undertone of this famous address may be found in these nine words, which were spoken in it: "The moral sentiment is the essence of all religion." This statement seems a mere truism, but Emerson's hearers were hardly pleased to hear him add that, in his view, historical Christianity had become corrupted; that the authority of the individual conscience had been overridden by creeds, forms, and an undue devotion to the person of Jesus, of whom he said: "Jesus Christ belonged to the true race of prophets; he saw with open eye the mystery of the soul; alone in all history he estimated the greatness of man;"—and that it was a great mistake to speak of Revelation as a past and finished thing. "The stationariness of religion, the assumption that the age of inspiration is passed, that the Bible is closed, the fear of degrading the character of Jesus by representing him as a man, indicate with sufficient clearness the falsehood of our theology. It is," exclaimed Emerson, "the office of a true teacher to show that God is, not was; that he speaketh, not spake." This insistance on the supremacy of one's individual moral nature, this belief in the immanence of Deity, were nothing new with Emerson, and are accepted, in some sense, by Protestantism everywhere, but they were so stated as to alarm most of Emerson's hearers, Unitarians included. It was thought that he had attempted to dethrone and debase Christianity, and an earnest controversy followed, in which the younger Henry Ware, the head of the Divinity

School, courteously withstood Emerson, emphasizing the need of a personal head in the Christian system, or any other. Emerson's friends have claimed, in reply, that his perception of the mind of Christ proved him not a worse, but a better, follower than most Christians are. But the controversy is as thoroughly forgotten now as the doctrinal debates of Boston and Cambridge two hundred years before. It is enough to say that in this address Emerson applied to general religion the principles he had already stated. In some respects, indeed, and always in his ethical statements, he would seem to rank with the conservatives of today, as when he says: "As we are, so we associate. The good, by affinity, seek the good; the vile, by affinity, the vile. Thus, of their own volition, souls proceed into heaven, into hell."

The remainder of Emerson's literary life was not marked by lectures or publications so significant, and in their results so sensational, as these. Emerson, with a calmness and serenity that characterized all his utterances, however bold or revolutionary, had spoken his thought and uttered his *credo;* his position was now known to all who cared to note it; thenceforward he had but to go on. In the same month of July, 1838, in which Emerson spoke to the Cambridge divinity students, he addressed the literary societies of Dartmouth College on "Literary Ethics." In this address—one of the best of Emerson's writings—there was nothing to cause any theological or other upheaval; it followed the lines of Emerson's previ-

"Literary Ethics," 1838.

ous utterances concerning the sense of right in the heart, the imperative and not-to-be-disobeyed idea of duty, and the scholar's bounden privilege of high intellectual independence and confidence in one's self. The speaker urgently bade his young hearers be true to their best hopes, nor bend to any low materialism of the age: "You will hear that the first duty is to get land and money, place and name. 'What is this truth you seek? What is this beauty?' men will ask, with derision. If, nevertheless, God have called any of you to explore truth and beauty, be bold, be firm, be true. When you shall say: 'As others do, so will I; I renounce, I am sorry for it, my early vision; I must eat the good of the land, and let learning and romantic expectations go, until a more convenient season,'—then dies the man in you; then once more perish the buds of art, and poetry, and science, as they have died already in a thousand thousand men. Bend to the persuasion which is flowing to you from every object in nature, to be its tongue to the heart of man, and to show to the besotted world how passing fair is wisdom. Why should you renounce your right to traverse the starlit deserts of truth, for the premature comforts of an acre, house, and barn?"

Emerson the lecturer.

For the rest of his life Emerson was a lecturer, before college societies, literary bodies, and country "lyceums." In Boston, winter after winter, he delivered courses of several lectures, and though these addresses were nearly all printed, sooner or later, in his increasing list of

volumes, probably as many knew Emerson the solid and felicitous speaker as Emerson the poet and essayist.

It has been a common experience with American authors to serve as editors of periodicals for longer or shorter periods. Lowell, Bryant, Whittier, and Poe were editors at one time or another, and Emerson had a similar experience for a brief period, as conductor of *The Dial*, the Transcendental organ in Boston. The little knot of men and women who were in general sympathy with the Transcendental movement were not, as Emerson explained, inventors of any new thing; they were simply modern idealists; working by the inner light rather than by cold external experience. In Emerson's definition: "The materialist insists on facts, on history, on the force of circumstances, and the animal wants of man; the idealist, on the power of thought and of will, on inspiration, on miracle, on individual culture." And again: "The materialist takes his departure from the external world, and esteems a man as one product of that. The idealist takes his departure from his consciousness, and reckons the world an appearance. His thought, that is the Universe." It will be seen from these quotations alone that the Transcendentalists were deeply and earnestly in the right, and also that their creed gave them ample opportunity to make fools of themselves, as individual members might elect to take some particular departure from their consciousness, and reckon the world an appearance. This opportunity was embraced by

The Dial.

some, and *The Dial* magazine, like the whole Transcendental movement, was a curious compound of the noblest and absurdest ingredients. Emerson himself was a strong and serene mind, apparently eccentric at times, and unfettered by traditions. But he was dominated by sound common-sense, and, like all great radicals and revolutionists, was well aware when the time for cessation and silence had come. A few of his associates shared neither his high ability nor his Yankee shrewdness, and thereby furnished Transcendentalism with certain spectacular and superfluous features which hurt it in the popular mind. As the great anti-slavery movement in the United States was shared by some who wished to abolish not only slavery, but God, religion, marriage, and meat-eating, so in the Transcendental revival there were not lacking a few who, hearing Emerson call their thought the universe, concluded that they were proprietors of the universe.

The Dial, however, was a part of the general American revival of thought, philanthropy, and religion in the early part of the century. Under Emerson's lead it unquestionably helped philanthropy and religion a little, and thought and literature much. After some discussion concerning its name—"The Spiritual Inquirer" and "The Transcendentalist" were titles considered—*The Dial* appeared in July, 1840, and was issued monthly for nearly four years. Miss Sarah Margaret Fuller (a personage concerning whose real place in American literature there has been much discussion, and

whose writings will be considered in a later page), was its first editor, and Emerson was its second. Neither editors nor contributors received any pay, but its pages really rivalled *The North American Review*, the great Boston periodical before the establishment of *The Atlantic Monthly*, in the array of names represented. Besides the editors, *The Dial* boasted among its contributors Henry D. Thoreau, A. Bronson Alcott, James Freeman Clarke, and Ellery Channing the younger. Its successive numbers included many essays and poems by Emerson, of which the essays "The Transcendentalist" and "The Conservative," and the poems "Woodnotes," "The Sphinx," and "The Problem" were the best. On the whole, Emerson and Thoreau were its most valuable writers, as measured by time's test; most of the contributions by others may be left to the mere antiquarian. But it was a prophecy as well as an achievement, a force as well as a result; and it gave young men and women a chance to utter their souls, not previously an easy task, so far as print was concerned, in conservative-radical Boston.

The Brook-Farm community.

As for the famous Brook-Farm community of 1841–1847, at West Roxbury, Mass., why speak of it at length? It was somewhat connected with the Transcendental simmer, and may be described as the application of the principles of *The Dial* to agriculture. Emerson sensibly kept out of it, and Hawthorne withdrew at an early opportunity. The amiable experiment was not in vain, for it left "The Blithedale Romance" as a book in American literature.

In 1841, when Emerson was thirty-eight years old, appeared his first collected volume of essays. In 1878, at the age of seventy-five, he put forth the last volume of his lifetime, a lecture entitled "The Fortune of the Republic." Between these two books, besides his two volumes of poetry, appeared the second series of the essays; "Nature, Addresses, and Lectures" (first published as Miscellanies); "Representative Men"; "English Traits"; "The Conduct of Life"; "Society and Solitude"; "Letters and Social Aims." Besides these books, many of Emerson's religious, political, or general addresses were issued in separate pamphlets, prior to their inclusion between covers; he introduced to the American public some of Carlyle's earliest ventures; he gave help in the preparation of the memorials of Margaret Fuller, and the manuscripts of Thoreau; he wrote an introduction to the only American edition of Saadi's "Gulistan"; he edited a collection of poetry aptly called "Parnassus," but valuable only as an indication of his own tastes; and he was a frequent contributor to one or two periodicals in Boston. After his death (in 1882, aged 79), two volumes were gathered from periodicals or manuscripts, and issued under the titles of "Miscellanies," and "Lectures and Biographical Sketches." His poems also appeared in an enlarged edition.

Emerson's works.

The collected edition of Emerson's works comprises eleven volumes, ten in prose. Of these ten volumes, nine may fairly be considered essays; for

the personal matter contained in "Representative Men" and in the various biographical sketches is so closely connected with a broad and philosophic view of life that it virtually is not severed from the general body of Emerson's writing. In a limited sense this is true even of the descriptive work entitled "English Traits." Emerson, therefore, was an essayist; in the essay he uttered his thoughts and presented his philosophy. When he lectured, he read his essays, and when he spoke on a personal theme, he connected his theme with his philosophy of life. Even of Carlyle all this could not be said with equal truth. The essays of Bacon are the dicta of a wise man, based on experience. The essays of Montaigne are the thoughts of a brilliant man, spontaneously uttered. The essays of Addison are the editorials or magazine articles of a graceful moralist in a mixed society. The essays of Lamb or Irving have the charm of humor and pathos, and are closely united with the sentiment of humanity. The essays of Emerson, ranging from the hearthstone to the boundless expanse of space and time, utter a philosophy of life, based on observation and also on insight; of large and devout optimism bent toward a practical good. Unlike Bacon, Emerson sought to construct no system, for his nature was that of a seer, not a mathematician. But he was a philosopher. Once more let his words be remembered as a summary of his life-work: "My whole philosophy, which is very real, teaches acquiescence and optimism." Acquiescence, to Emerson, was a

Emerson the essayist.

reverent making the most of one's self; optimism was a serene trust which could wait for the developments of an eternity in which, as it profoundly believed, the present played a part. This philosophy runs through his prose and his verse, and is never lost. In its presence the names and titles of his various books seem minor details in a constant work. Few men of letters have written so uniformly, from youth to age. The titles of the chapters in the first collection of essays might serve as a synopsis of all that came after: "History," "Self-Reliance," "Compensation," "Spiritual Laws," "Love," "Friendship," "Prudence," "Heroism," "The Over-Soul," "Circles," "Intellect," "Art."

Emerson's style.

The literary style in which Emerson wrote was distinctly his own. It was not Bacon's, nor Addison's, nor Macaulay's, nor Carlyle's. It was remarkably free from the antitheses and balanced forms in which so many preceding essayists had written, and it was also free from pedantry, Latinisms, and mere quotations. Emerson, as a writer, has been compared with that minister who gradually filled a barrel with separately written pages, and picked out enough for a sermon when Sunday came. Again, it has been said that Emerson's essays would read as well backwards as forwards, sentence by sentence. But, on the other hand, few thinkers have given signs of a closer and more unified mental habit, and few, certainly, have been more fruitful in stimulating hearer and reader. Is there any truth in these semi-jocose criticisms?

Simply this, that Emerson's intellect was characterized by sententiousness. He uttered sayings, and must be classed with those who have adopted this method, from the great Hebrew poets and proverb-writers to the makers of *dicta* in our own day. This method sometimes wearies the reader; no more than one of Emerson's essays can be read at a time; and sometimes it sacrifices consistency. Emerson refuses to be "the slave of his yesterdays." "I am not careful to justify myself. . . . I am only an experimenter. . . . I unsettle all things. No facts are to me sacred; none are profane; I simply experiment, an endless seeker, with no Past at my back." The seed-corn of his thought, however, is from Nature's field, and in its weaker way it fructifies as truly and regularly, if as spontaneously and apparently wildly, as Nature herself when studied by the receptive mind.

As an illustration (perhaps the best single illustration that can be selected) of Emerson's literary method, let us take some words of his concerning literature itself: *

> Literature is the record of the best thoughts. Every attainment and discipline which increases a man's acquaintance with the invisible world, lifts his being. Every thing that gives him a new perception of beauty, multiplies his pure enjoyments. A river of thought is always running out of the invisible world into the mind of man. Shall not they who received the largest streams spread abroad the healing waters? Homer and Plato and Pindar and Shakespeare serve many more than have heard their

* From Emerson's address at the opening of the Munroe Free Library at Concord, Mass., Oct. 1, 1873.

names. Thought is the most volatile of all things. It can not be contained in any cup, though you shut the lid never so tight. Once brought into the world, it runs over the vessel which received it into all minds that love it. The very language we speak thinks for us by the subtle distinctions which already are marked for us by its words, and every one of them is the contribution of the wit of one and another sagacious man in all the centuries of time. Consider that it is our own state of mind at any time that makes our estimate of life and the world. If you sprain your foot, you will presently come to think that Nature has sprained hers. Every thing begins to look so slow and inaccessible. And when you sprain your mind, by gloomy reflections on your failures and vexations, you come to have a bad opinion of life. Think how indigent Nature must appear to the blind, the deaf, and the idiot. Now, if you can kindle the imagination by a new thought, by heroic histories, by uplifting poetry, instantly you expand, are cheered, inspired, and become wise, and even prophetic. Music works this miracle for those who have a good ear; what omniscience has music! so absolutely impersonal, and yet every sufferer feels his secret sorrow reached. Yet to a scholar the book is as good or better. There is no hour of vexation which, on a little reflection, will not find diversion in the library. His companions are few; at the moment he has none: but, year by year, these silent friends supply their place. . . . Angels they are to us of entertainment, sympathy, and provocation. With them many of us spend the most of our life,—these silent guides, these tractable prophets, historians, and singers, whose embalmed life is the highest feat of art; who now cast their moonlight illumination over solitude, weariness, and fallen fortunes. . . . In saying these things for books, I do not for a moment forget that they are secondary, mere means, and only used in the off-hours, only in the pause, and, as it were, the sleep, or passive state, of the mind. The intel-

lect reserves all its rights. Instantly, when the mind itself wakes, all books, all past acts are forgotten, huddled aside as impertinent in the august presence of the creator. Their costliest benefit is that they set us free from ourselves; for they wake the imagination and the sentiment, and in their inspirations we dispense with books.

In these terse words Emerson unconsciously describes his own books, and their effect upon the reader. In verity they "kindle the imagination by a new thought [in almost every essay], by heroic histories [in "Representative Men"], by uplifting poetry." And their readers "instantly expand, are cheered, inspired, and become wise."

Such was the teacher, and such the method and range of his thoughts and utterance. The same spirit breathes through a thousand variant words:

Emerson the teacher.

Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, criticisms. The foregoing generations beheld God and Nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight, and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs?

As a plant on the earth, so man rests on the bosom of God, nourished by unfailing fountains, and drawing at its need inexhaustible power.

The happiest man is he who learns from Nature the lesson of worship.

Wherever snow falls, or water flows, or birds fly, wherever day and night meet in twilight, wherever the blue heaven is hung by clouds, or sown with stars, wherever are forms with transparent boundaries, wherever

are outlets into celestial space, wherever is danger, and awe, and love, there is Beauty, plenteous as rain, shed for thee, and though thou shouldst walk the world over, thou shalt not be able to find a condition inopportune or ignoble.

When we are exalted by ideas, we do not owe this to Plato, but to the idea, to which also Plato was debtor.

Morals implies freedom and will. The will constitutes the man. He has his life in Nature, like a beast; but choice is born in him; here is he that chooses; here is the Declaration of Independence, the July Fourth of zoölogy and astronomy. He chooses,—as the rest of creation does not.

If we must accept fate, we are not less compelled to affirm liberty, the significance of the individual, the grandeur of duty, the power of character. This is true, and that other is true. But our geometry cannot span these extreme points, and reconcile them. What to do? By obeying each thought promptly, by harping, or, if you will, pounding on each string, we learn at last its power. By this same obedience to other thoughts, we learn theirs; and then comes some reasonable hope of harmonizing them. We are sure, that, though we know not how, necessity does comport with liberty, the individual with the world, my polarity with the spirit of the times.

A man's power is hooped in by necessity, which, by many experiments, he touches on every side, until he learns its arc. The limitations refine as the soul purifies, but the ring of necessity is always perched at the top. If we give it the high sense in which the poets use it, even thought itself is not above fate; that, too, must act according to eternal laws; and all that is wilful and fantastic in it is in opposition to its fundamental essence. Last of all, high over thought, in the world of morals, fate appears as vindicator, levelling the high, lifting the low, requiring justice in man, and always striking soon or late, when justice is not done. What is useful will last; what is hurtful will sink.

Good is positive. Evil is merely privative, not absolute; it is like cold, which is the privation of heat. All evil is so much death, or nonenity. Benevolence is absolute and real. So much benevolence as a man hath, so much life hath he. Whilst a man seeks good ends, he is strong by the whole strength of nature. In so far as he roves from these ends, he bereaves himself of power, or auxiliaries; his being shrinks out of all remote channels; he becomes less and less, a mote, a point, until absolute badness is absolute death.

This last statement is reiterated in various forms, in essay after essay, in poem after poem. Perhaps its concisest expression is in a fragment printed in the posthumously enlarged collection of poems:

> For God hath writ all dooms magnificent
> So guilt not traverses his tender will.

Has not the "philosophy of Emerson" been made sufficiently plain by what we have here read? Its outward glance looks toward God himself, and sees the unseen Spirit mirrored everywhere:

> Thou meetest him by centuries,
> And lo! he passes like the breeze;
> Thou seek'st in globe and galaxy,
> He hides in pure transparency;
> Thou askest in fountains and in fires,
> He is the essence that inquires.
> He is the axis of the star;
> He is the sparkle of the spar;
> He is the heart of every creature;
> He is the meaning of each feature.*

Or, again—

> Higher far,
> Upward into the pure realm,

* "Wood-Notes."

Over sun and star,
Over the flickering Dæmon film,
Thou must mount for love;
Into vision where all form
In one only form dissolves,
In a region where the wheel
On which all beings ride
Visibly revolves;
Where the starred, eternal worm
Girds the world with bound and term;
Where unlike things are like,
Where good and ill,
And joy and moan,
Melt into one.
There Past, Present, Future, shoot;
Substances at base divided
In their summits are united;
There the holy essence rolls
One through separated souls;
And the sunny Æon sleeps,
Folding Nature in its deeps;
And every fair and every good,
Known in part or known impure
To men below,
In their archetypes endure.
The race of gods,
Of those we erring own,
Are shadows flitting up and down
In the still abodes.
The circles of that sea are laws
Which publish and which hide their cause. *

But this ideal, mystic, visionary, American-Oriental, thus peering into the vague unknown eternities of Deity itself, is the most personal and practical of writers, and all his message is to

Individualism.

* "Initial, Dæmonic, and Celestial Love."

the individual. From these outward shadowy bounds of his philosophy he ever returns to the *man* to whom he speaks :

> It is not what talents or genius a man has, but how he is to his talents, that constitutes friendship and character. The man stands by himself, the universe stands by him also.
>
> A point of education that I can never too much insist upon is this tenet, that every individual man has a bias which he must obey, and it is only as he feels and obeys this that he rightly develops and attains his legitimate power in the world. It is his magnetic needle, which points always in one direction to his proper path, with more or less variation from any other man's. He is never happy or strong until he finds it, keeps it ; learns to be at home with himself ; learns to watch the delicate hints and insights that come to him, and to have the entire assurance of his own mind. And in this self-respect, or hearkening to the privatest oracle, he need never be at a loss. In morals, this is conscience ; in intellect, genius ; in practice, talent,—not to imitate or surpass a particular man in *his* way, but to bring out your own new way ; to each his own method, style, wit, eloquence.

Americanism.

By this individualism was founded the great nation in which Emerson so thoroughly believed, and upon it must that nation rest in the future. Said Emerson in his last-published book, a lecture on " The Fortunes of the Republic " : " Let the passion for America cast out the passion for Europe. Here let there be what the earth waits for,—exalted manhood. What this country longs for is personalities, grand persons, to counteract its materialities. For it is the rule of the universe that

corn shall serve man, and not man corn." More than this, Emerson would found upon "exalted manhood" not only the life of the United States, but the life of that which has been well called "The Republic of God."

What are the faults of Emerson as a thinker and writer?

The most conspicuous, doubtless, is a certain vagueness of thought and utterance. I do not refer to those poems or prose passages which, though deemed "orphic," or mystic, or unduly concise, are yet intentional in form and clear in meaning to him who will study them. A good example of writing of this class is the much-discussed poem of "Brahma," which, to an intelligent mind willing to stop to consider the purpose of the poem, as well as its form, is as clear as daylight. I mean, rather, those prose passages (and less frequent poetic utterances) in which Emerson maunders along in well-balanced, terse sentences, which are not devoid of sense, separately, but are combined in no consistent or valuable whole. In Emerson's case it not infrequently happens that the whole is less than the sum of all its parts. This fault may be studied in the essay entitled "Immortality." Emerson thoroughly believed in personal immortality, and the essay contains fine and true sayings; but it would be difficult to construct an equal number of pages leaving a more vague and profitless effect upon the reader's mind. This single line by another poet,

Emerson's faults.

"Life is love, and love is eternity,"

is worth more than the whole essay. In this matter of Hebrew explicitness on a definite religious theme Carlyle easily surpassed Emerson. Carlyle raved and spoke wildly at times, when Emerson was bland and cautious; but Carlyle, on an august theme, was never intangible. This criticism applies but to a small portion of Emerson's writings, but it falls upon that portion with crushing force.

Again, Emerson was at times superficial; and, what is worse, spoke authoritatively on subjects concerning which he had no deep knowledge. That which he disliked he too often contemptuously condemned. His method, as has been said, was that of *outspeaking*, and this method, applied to the whole universe by one with intense prejudices and fixed limits, is a dangerous one. In the case of his imitators it became grotesque, and undoubtedly retarded habits of close and orderly thought in America.

But on the general estimate, the work of Emerson is of great importance to America and to the world. His name, by any standard of just judgment, must ever stand in honor. The general estimate. The ideal, the beautiful, the true, the right, the godlike, he set in burning words over against the merely material, the utilitarian, the false, the politic, the animal and worldly. He restated for the modern world the eternal principles of transcendentalism, of spiritualism, of the inner light, never lost since the days of Plato. He told the world anew, and in fresh words, of the great First Cause, by whom and in whom are all things. He ever emphasized

the potency and the duty of individual freedom and of the development of the man. In this last line of work he achieved his greatest results. "Be bold, be free," he exclaimed to all men; but he added: "Be true, be right, else you will be enslaved cowards." Of him his friend, fellow-poet, and biographer has aptly written:

"From his mild throng of worshippers released,
Our Concord Delphi sends its chosen priest,
Prophet or poet, mystic, sage, or seer,
By every title always welcome here.
Why that ethereal spirit's frame describe?
You know the race-marks of the Brahmin tribe,—
The spare, slight form, the sloping shoulders' droop,
The calm, scholastic air, the clerkly stoop,
The lines of thought the narrowed features wear,
Worn sharp by studious nights and frugal fare.

"List! for he speaks! As when a king would choose
The jewels for his bride, he might refuse
This diamond for its flaw,—find that less bright
Than those, its fellows, and a pearl less white
Than fits her snowy neck, and yet at last,
The fairest gems are chosen, and made fast
In golden fetters; so, with light delays
He seeks the fittest word to fill his phrase;
Nor vain nor idle his fastidious quest,
His chosen word is sure to prove the best.

"Where in the realm of thought, whose air is song,
Does he, the Buddha of the West, belong?
He seems a winged Franklin, sweetly wise,
Born to unlock the secrets of the skies,—
And which the nobler calling, if 't is fair
Terrestrial with celestial to compare,—
To guide the storm-cloud's elemental flame,
Or walk the chambers whence the lightning came,

Amidst the sources of its subtile fire,
And steal their effluence for his lips and lyre?

"If lost at times in vague aërial flights,
None treads with firmer footstep when he lights;
A soaring nature, ballasted with sense,
Wisdom without her wrinkles or pretence,
In every Bible he has faith to read,
And every altar helps to shape his creed."

CHAPTER X.

ESSAYISTS AND CRITICS.

THE essay, in more than one of its directions, has been represented creditably in America. If we define the word somewhat in the sense in which Lord Bacon used it, as a brief literary composition on some important theme of religion, morals, taste, intellect, or the conduct of life, the essays of Emerson, studied in the preceding chapter, fulfil the definition, and add to it an original element. If by the term essay we are reminded of the gracious and winsome work of Addison, Steele, or Lamb, in which grave and gay are discussed with pathos or humor, and in a style which is finished at its best or attitudinizing at its worst, the writings of Washington Irving occur to the mind of the reader. A few attempts have even been made—by Franklin, Irving, Mitchell, Curtis —to revive and perpetuate the periodical essay. If, again, we are thinking of the critical essay of Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, or Sainte-Beuve, it is no shame to add to their company the genuinely Yankee but soundly scholarly James Russell Lowell. Of all the chief departments of English essay-writing, but one has been ineffectively represented

American essays.

in the United States: the biographical or historical essay of the Macaulay type, in which the author, taking a book-title for a text, proceeds to write a miniature "life and times" or "complete history." The pages of our reviews are full of imitations of Macaulay, short paragraphs, antitheses, and all, which sadly prove that "all that flams is not flamboyant." Even in this division, however, is found the historical essay of Motley or Prescott; Motley's "Peter the Great," if it is less than Macaulay's work, is also some thing more.

Besides these writers, there is another American whose work as a poet will be considered in a future volume of this history, but who must also take his place in the present chapter. Oliver Wendell Holmes, as an essayist, does not belong to the school of Bacon, or Addison, or Lamb, or Carlyle, or Montaigne, or Sainte-Beuve. It would be easy, perhaps, to frame a comparison between him and Christopher North, and to say that Holmes performed for *The Atlantic Monthly*, in its early years, a service like that which Christopher gave to *Maga* long ago. In their writings, too, there is a little likeness. But to carry out this comparison, or any other, would be valueless, and might mislead. It is better to say that Holmes followed an original idea in his Breakfast-Table series. When he was a young man, so he tells us in the illustrated edition of "The Last Leaf," he found that some poetasters were probably imitating his metrical forms, and determined to produce a poem in a metre wholly unfamiliar, so

Oliver Wendell Holmes, b. 1809.

that any imitation could be instantly detected. No such idea, doubtless, occurred to him when, half accidentally, he hit upon the rambling, varied path which "The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table" and his successors, the "Professor" and the "Poet," followed for so many years; but the result was equally his own property. In these three books, if there be a conspicuous influence, it is that of Sterne, an influence which the careful reader can discern in the pages of so widely different an author as Jean Paul Richter, and which was transferred thence to "Sartor Resartus." But literary rambling is older than Holmes, Carlyle, Richter, Sterne, or Burton's "Anatomy"; discursiveness and an alert wit have marked most of the better humorists of all the world. The reader of those of Holmes' prose works which are not novels, biographies, or brief medical disquisitions, does not stop to criticise or trace intellectual influences, he is content to enjoy, and is sure that he is in the presence of a native force, which he need not stop to label and assign to its proper shelf in the literary cabinet. On the whole, in this study of American literature, where detailed arrangement of our literary product becomes necessary, it seems clear that Doctor Holmes is to be ranked among the essayists, and that in their company he stands in a place of his own.

"The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table."

When Holmes was twenty years old* —so he tells us in the preface to the "Autocrat"—he printed in *The New England Magazine* the first of two papers called "The

* November, 1831.

Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table." They attracted little attention; the author frankly calls them "crude products of his uncombed literary boyhood", but he never forgot them; and when, in 1857, *The Atlantic Monthly* was started, he concluded to return to them and continue the series, thinking that "it would be a curious experiment to shake the same bough again, and see if the ripe fruit were better or worse than the early windfalls." The experiment did not have to wait long for success. Holmes was nearly fifty years old, and was, in verity, able to offer to the public the "ripe fruit" of his mind. Discursive writing, or rambling talk, demands this quality of ripeness. When young writers have attempted to print dicta, ana, gossip, proverbs, *pensées*, or what you will in the department of literature which comes under the general head of Sayings, they have usually failed. This sort of work demands experience and reflection, neither of which is a common attribute of juvenility. No matter how light the manner or how jovial the spirit, a Montaigne, Sterne, or Lamb must be a man of wisdom and experience, in one way or another. It was well that Holmes' early series of Autocrat papers was postponed until his middle life. It was also lucky for the magazine which was in its early years the most important American monthly. that such genial wit and wisdom, such unfamiliar attractiveness of style, was to lead it to success after a general period of business depression.

"The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table" was a

genuinely Yankee book—New Englandism at its best, interpreted so familiarly that running readers might comprehend its good points. Holmes is thoroughly Bostonian; an occasional trip to New York, a summer a few miles north of Boston, satisfy his desires for any outside world. He visits Europe at half-century intervals. His books have a similar local contentment. In practical sense, in alertness of thought, in neatness of phrase, in quaint mixture of earthly shrewdness and starry ideality, the words and ways of the breakfast-table of which the Autocrat is the head, represent the Massachusetts founded by the Puritans and Pilgrims, freed by Sam. Adams and his fellows, mitigated by Channing, and nationalized by Webster and Everett. If the Autocrat's wit is homely on one page, it is poetical on the next; the verse scattered throughout the book is its greatest charm. Here is a poem of mere fun, here one touched with pathos, and a little farther on a hymn of faith and trust. Holmes' Yankee shrewdness forgets the eternal verities no more than does Emerson's. Calvinism, in the eyes of its bitter and relentless opponent, Doctor Holmes, falls in a collapse as complete as that of the "One-Hoss Shay"; but his faith exclaims, in the last stanza of "The Chambered Nautilus":

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length are free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!"

Books of talk.

The underlying idea of the three Autocrat books is that of *talk*. That the art of conversation has not died out in this "materialistic age"; that its range is as broad, its possibilities as high, as ever; and that a chronicle of conversation in a mixed company can be made to teach and preach, yet constantly to entertain—this is the thing which the Autocrat series unconsciously proves. The merit of the three books does not, perhaps, have a rising scale; in the later volumes we do not find such poems as "The Chambered Nautilus" or "The One-Hoss Shay," nor a proverb as this: "Boston State-House is the hub of the solar system. You could n't pry that out of a Boston man if you had the tire of all creation straightened out for a crowbar." * But if the Professor is unequal to the Autocrat, it may fairly be claimed that the Poet surpasses the Professor. The art of saying things wise and witty will never leave Doctor Holmes so long as he lives. It brightens his verse; it reappears in his essays; it adorns his novels; and it even plays through his biographies and scientific writings. But merely to say a thing well, without reference to the thing said, or its effect upon the reader, forms not the whole of the author's scheme. He is describing life, Yankee or universal, in many persons and in many phases. He is fighting for common-sense, as he understands it; for healthful existence, as he would have it; for liberality in still-conservative New England. "Oliver Wendell Holmes: his Say-so," might be the title of the three Breakfast-Table books, and of

* "Autocrat," pp. 143–144.

much else that the author has written. The frank and quaintly humorous motto of the first of them, "Every Man his own Boswell," is more than a joke, and has more than a dramatic application to the leading character, for it goes back to the writer. And if this American humorist is wrong in making his wit and satire and pathos tell toward a beneficent and reformatory purpose, then he is wrong in the company of almost all Anglo-Saxon humorists from Chaucer down. Is there not a chemical trace of Chaucer in these Massachusetts men, Holmes and Lowell? Do they not, like the author of the "Canterbury Tales," describe the men and women and ideas of their own time and land, so that bigotry and hypocrisy may be satirized, that humanity may be raised up, and that fresh nature may be brought before the eyes of men?

The man behind the books.

Holmes deems nothing human foreign to him; therefore he works in many fields. A subsequent volume of this History must, as has been said, consider his important work in poetry. A part of his prose and much of his poetry might be reviewed under the head of American humor. Yet he is an intense polemic. Against such errors—in his conviction—as homœopathy and Calvinism he battles fiercely, and hits them strong blows at random, if he gets a chance. Upon American literature he has made his own mark, and the mark is deep and characteristic and readily recognizable, whether it be in prose or verse, in humor, satire, story, or essay. In whatever Holmes writes these qualities are recognizable: good sense, though the

reader may disagree with him; good humor, though the writer be terribly in earnest; and an alert mind. It is Holmes' misfortune, in one sense, that we instinctively apply to him the adjective *clever;* his quickness is of the character that is usually allied to talent rather than to genius. More particularly this is applicable to his prose; his novels (in which we might expect ideality), full as they are of dicta worthy of a philosopher, are not works of genius. In "Elsie Venner," "The Guardian Angel," and "A Mortal Antipathy," Holmes studies problems in psychology and heredity; he does not, like Hawthorne in "The Scarlet Letter," put a masterly result before the reader, and keep himself in the background. Therefore the essay, perhaps Spectator-like, including a story, is his vantage-ground as a writer. The ideal element in him crops out here and there in all he writes; but he appears moved by genius only in his choicest poems.

A wholesome writer.

The prevailing impression left by this original nineteenth-century representative of Sterne on the one hand or Pope on the other, is one of wholesomeness. "Our libraries," he has himself said, "are crammed with books written by spiritual hypochondriacs, which should be transferred to studios of insanity." The row on the shelf devoted to Holmes' works is a place of sunlight and cheer. They are voluminous, garrulous, intolerant of the file or pruning-knife, irregular in merit. Says the master in "The Poet of the Breakfast-Table": "A sick man that gets talking about himself, a woman that gets talking about her baby, and an author that be-

gins reading out of his own book, never knows when to stop." Holmes, under many an *alias*, is an author reading out of his own book, and that book is his brain. But the best of it is, that his readers or hearers do not want him to stop. The very reason they like him is because he is, in his own playful words:

. . . . . .

A Boswell, writing out himself!
For though he changes dress and name,
The man beneath is still the same,
Laughing or sad, by fits and starts.
One actor in a dozen parts,
And whatsoe'er the mask may be,
The voice assures us, *This is he.**

The essayist, in modern times, must write *for* a periodical; he can no longer, like Addison, Steele, Johnson, and the rest, make one which shall consist wholly of the work of himself and his friends. Even Franklin, in his youthful series called "The Busy-Body," printed his revised-Addisonian papers in a general newspaper. The periodical-essay, all by itself, with its miscellany of prose and verse, chiefly by one or two writers, has not flourished in America. Dana's "Idle Man" is forgotten; Irving's "Salmagundi" is one of the least-read of his books, and Donald G. Mitchell's "Lorgnette"† is known chiefly to a few collectors of first editions. The eighteenth-century essay has forever gone out of vogue, and it is useless to try to revive it in externals.

* Epilogue to the Breakfast-Table Series, in "The Poet of the Breakfast-Table," p. 410.

† "Studies of the Town by an Opera-goer."

Instead of a town, with its aggregation of court, clubs, coffee-houses, theatres, "routs," etc., we have a nation. Steam and the telegraph have pretty thoroughly demolished literary provincialism, and the old type of essay was thoroughly provincial. It could exist only when London was England, or at least literary England. It must address, and be supported by, society. But Addison's work was, of course, a precursor of many things: of the careful editorial in the modern high-class weekly, of the "serial story," of criticism as we now understand it, of gentle but telling social censorship in the periodical press, indeed of the periodical press itself, in its many functions. And a part of the personal element in the eighteenth-century essay survives, in the nineteenth, in changed forms. It reappears in Christopher North's *Blackwood* work; in The Autocrat and his successors in *The Atlantic Monthly;* in George William Curtis and his Editor's Easy Chair in *Harper's Magazine;* in the Topics of the Time series in *Scribner's Monthly*, written by Dr. Holland, the plain New England moralist and reformer, representing Western Massachusetts as Holmes represents Eastern. It also survives in the personality we assign to those newspapers, like *The Saturday Review* or *The Nation*, which most carefully guard the anonymous; and, finally, in the essays that various writers contribute to periodicals, with their names, and then collect in an annual, or biennial, or occasional volume. Not much of this work is or can be great—indeed, who are the

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century essays.

great contemporary essayists of England, France, or Germany? It must be content if it can please and quietly entertain, like "Ik Marvel's" "Reveries of a Bachelor," or "Dream-Life," over which young readers wax so sentimentally enthusiastic; or if it can teach common-sense, in life and letters, to those plain Americans who lack the highest culture, but like to read, and who form the very bone and sinew of the nation. Such work as this was done by Josiah Gilbert Holland, the titles of whose books describe their character well enough: "Letters to Young People"; "Letters to the Joneses"; "Gold-Foil Hammered from Popular Proverbs"; "Lessons in Life"; Plain Talks on Familiar Subjects"; "Every-Day Topics." Holland began in the sentimental age, when an alliterative pseudonym was thought indispensable; but he continued to work until his *Scribner's Monthly* (now *The Century*) instructed the nation in letters and in an art unknown to the editor himself in his early days as a country journalist. Such writers, of various degrees of merit, America has never lacked; their work cannot live in literature, but it has spread some of the amenities of thought, and softened the literary soil in rugged regions to which the future of American literature must look for support.

Donald Grant Mitchell, "Ik Marvel," b. 1822.

Josiah Gilbert Holland, "Timothy Titcomb," 1819–1881.

Broader than Dr. Holland in his range, less devoted to the work of lay-preaching, and of higher literary ability than either Holland or Mitchell, is George William Curtis. In him, more than in any

George William Curtis, b. 1824.

American writer of his time, is represented, *mutatis mutandis*, the temper of Addison and Irving, as well as some of their methods. Addison has not been repeated, nor have his times; but if Addison had been a modern American, perhaps he might, like Curtis, have written for many a year graceful and finished little essays for the closing pages of successive numbers of *Harper's Magazine*, or more frequent editorials for a weekly newspaper. Curtis treats of the play and the opera, of literary men living and dead, of old New York and bygone American days, of city customs and country ways, of national virtues and foibles, of foreign views of America and American ideas concerning Europe, of colleges and schools, economies and extravagances, war and peace, trade and culture, politics and priestcraft, woman and man. Two or three articles a month demand many a theme, and Curtis' good-sense, genial temper, broad knowledge, and winsome style, make him a good censor of American morals. That the attractiveness of his writing is elusive, is its element of strength; for who cares to analyze that which fails if it does not please?

The "Editor's Easy Chair."

Though Curtis has chosen his path, and has successfully followed it, the path is not one which, in itself, leads to a literary fame that is lasting. The "Howadji" notes in Syria or on the Nile; the pleasant papers that make up "Lotos-Eating, a Summer Book"; the sharply-drawn descriptions of some American vices and follies in the novel called "Trumps"—there is not enough in these to main-

tain an author's place. The public demands that its amusement, proffered by this sort of reading, shall be fresh; not often does a book of this class get a lasting hold upon favor. In the preface to the "Nile Notes of a Howadji," Curtis draws a little moral from the Persian: "'Of what use is a flower?' 'A flower is good to smell.'" The critic need not claim more than the author, for the book in question.

Curtis the essayist.

But for Curtis the essayist one may make high claims, with confidence. If, as I have intimated, he is not, more than any living American writer, the successor or representative of the spirit of Addison, Lamb, Irving, I know not whose name could more fitly be mentioned. He resembles Addison rather than Lamb or Irving. If his humor, wisdom, broad culture, catholic temper, and attractive style are not well known to future readers, it will be due to the changed place of the periodical press in the last part of the nineteenth century, as compared with its place seventy-five, or a hundred and seventy-five, years ago. Month follows month, and few re-read old numbers of magazines. But if Curtis would gather in book form, in orderly arrangement, and with such revisions as might be needed, those Easy-Chair papers which have perennial interest and value, it would be found that they could be mentioned with the best literature of their class. That brilliant satire on New York "shoddy" society, Curtis' "Potiphar Papers," is read, thirty years after its issue; the periodical essays, if collected for the library and

aptly titled anew, or called simply "The Easy Chair," would not sooner lose appreciative readers.

All the later American essayists whose names stand out from the many, may be divided, for convenience' sake, into the following classes: Transcendentalists, miscellaneous essayists, critics, and essayists of themes connected with the world of nature. In such a classification, or in any other, of course, the name of Emerson leads his own division and all the rest; while of the miscellaneous essayists the chief is Holmes, if he be assigned to their number. No argument is needed to show that Lowell is the most conspicuous American critic, the writer whom we would instructively name as occupying a representative position like that of Mr. Arnold in England. Lowell represents indigenous American culture as Arnold represents English. In the fourth and last division the work of Thoreau stands foremost; indeed, it may be doubted whether any other name, in the pleasant company of American writers on nature, is worthy of mention beside his. It seems reasonably certain that these four names—I will rather say the three names, for Emerson's place is secure—will not soon be forgotten, and it is equally apparent that they are now without American rivals in their respective departments of literary labor. If, again, we fall back upon the term "Concord authors," a characterization perhaps not quite so valueless as the term "Lake School," we find the names of Emerson and Thoreau in proper conjunction, the conjunction of *best* and *good* in partially kindred work. Inferior

to Emerson in every trait of character and in every element of genius, Thoreau, like Emerson, was at least a son of the soil, true to himself, and able to make an original contribution to the literature of his country.

Of the goodly company of Concord writers, some took up their residence in the town before it became famous, and others turned to it because it had become the "Transcendental Mecca" of America, or, in common English, because Emerson lived there. But Thoreau's right to be called a Concord author is certainly complete, for he was born in the town, July 12, 1817, long before it had any dream of becoming a Mecca, or any thing but a solid, honest New England farming-community. As Thoreau's name indicates, his ancestry was French, but the family, on the father's side, had been English and American for several generations, while Thoreau's mother was a New Englander named Dunbar. A European reader who should be misled by Thoreau's name, and think him aught but a Yankee farmer, would lose one secret of his success as essayist, naturalist, and poet. He was the New England rural onlooker, the faithful chronicler of the woods, streams, fields, and skies of his world, that is to say, of the town of his birth. He had seen something of outside life; had graduated at Harvard College; had learned how to survey land; could make a good lead-pencil; and could till a plain garden in fair fashion. There exists a somewhat common idea that Thoreau was a life-long recluse; in fact his

Henry David Thoreau, 1817–1862,

hut-life near Walden Pond formed no more than a brief period in his career. He travelled little, but thoroughly enjoyed a trip to Canada, or a pedestrian visit to Cape Cod or the Maine woods; and he made quite voluminous records of such journeys. His mind was simple, so were his wants; and there seems little doubt that his marked eccentricities were genuine, and not assumed for effect. He was no city gentleman, masquerading at Brook Farm in the garb of a day-laborer, and dreaming of reorganizing the world on a Fourierite-phalanstery basis. He knew nature and loved it; in his descriptions of his life there is no affectation or attitudinizing of the Walt Whitman order. In fact, he was so genuinely autochthonous, so enthusiastically and perpetually devoted to the woods and waters of his home, that this very affection made him selfish, neglectful of his duties as a citizen and a man among men, and, so far as his non-literary influence was concerned, of little use in the world. One writer has called Thoreau "Emerson's leading pupil"; and it is probably true that no writer who came directly under the influence of the Concord sage so aptly learned some of the lessons he taught, and at the same time preserved unmixed that independence of charcter upon which Emerson ever insisted. But the pupil fell short of the master's attainments and work, not, of course, in quantity alone, but also in quality. Emerson liked certain elements in Thoreau, and Thoreau, in his undemonstrative way, assigned Emerson a place shared in his mind by no other modern man. But

the largeness of Emerson was painfully lacking in Thoreau; the one got, in his close library and in his occasional walks afield, a charity which the other imbibed with the free and long draughts of country air in his constant life amid the voices and silences of nature. That Thoreau got near to Nature's heart, and described her in simple, true, poetic, eloquent words, is one of the facts for which every reader of American literature is thankful. It may be questioned whether another naturalist of his time has better portrayed a part of her breadth and depth, her greatness and littleness, and her deep philosophy. Thoreau peered into the clear waters of Walden Pond, and saw more than "a straight stick bent in a pool." But, notwithstanding his life among large things, and the breadth of his writing, his personal character was not large. I have mentioned Whitman's conscious or unconscious artificiality, as contrasted with Thoreau's sincerity; yet in the character of Whitman are more largeness and light than in that of Thoreau.

Thoreau's works.

The writings of Thoreau are comprised in nine volumes—a little library of words written from, to, and in nature. Behind his descriptions is a thoughtful mind, and his observations are strengthened by a decent culture, begun at college and aided by constant reading of a few books. By the bole of the elm-tree Plato seems to stand, and Greek summer hovers over Massachusetts winter. Here is the life of nature, and back of the life, the mind of nature. One of Thoreau's

biographers * was right in calling him a "poet-naturalist." He was too much a poet to forget the soul of things, the ideal behind the real; and too much a naturalist to neglect the constant habit of accurate observation. He might have said to the forests and streams of Concord, to its fauna and flora: "A chiel's amang ye, takin' notes." His notes of nature and natural history were taken because he loved his subjects, and not because he wanted to rush into print. Of his nine books only two, "Walden; or, Life in the Woods," and "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers," were printed during the author's lifetime. After his death his friends gathered from his voluminous papers, not even yet all published, an account of the Maine woods, a shrewd and entertaining record of a pedestrian tour on Cape Cod; divers excursions in field and forest; the story of the sight-seeings of a Yankee in Canada, and extracts from his journal, collected under the titles of "Early Spring in Massachusetts," and "Summer." Besides these, there is a volume made up of comparatively unimportant letters and highly interesting poems, one or two of which I shall presently copy. Of these books, the most characteristic ones—the entities, so to speak, are Walden and Cape Cod, which, with the poems, slightly stand out from the rest. As a rule, however, Thoreau is a remarkably even writer; his chapters were like his days, merely separate parts of a serene and little-diversified life, free from the re-

* William Ellery Channing, the poet.

straints and pleasures of a real home, remote from burning human hopes and struggles, and, while caring much for the slave, caring little for country. No one would have thought of turning to this isolated life for personal sympathy, but Thoreau, in his turn, stood in small need of eliciting human help beyond his family, between whose members and himself there was a mild but genuine affection. He seemed to add something to the Emersonian courageous individuality, but in fact he let go from it the strongest part, its helpful humanity. It would not be a pleasant task to cull from Thoreau's writings proofs of an individualism which, to speak plainly, was terribly unlike the individualism of Jesus. After all, we read and praise Thoreau for what he tells us of the things he saw, and not for his records of himself.* In my copy of the life of Thoreau, by F. B. Sanborn—a record which, in thoroughness, painstaking accuracy, and hearty enthusiasm, leaves nothing lacking on the biographer's part—is a photograph of Thoreau, taken in 1861, and bearing Mr. Sanborn's attestation: "This was the very man." The bearded face is that of one alert, thoughtful, sensitive, poetic—not the dull, ugly farmer represented in some woodcuts from another picture, without the full beard. But in the full eyes are suspicion, timorousness, aloofness, showing that he was, as Hawthorne found him, "a singular character, a young man

* Those who wish to study his personality from a favorable point of view should read the "Life" by F. B. Sanborn; from an unfavorable, Mr. Lowell's strong essay. Emerson's biographical sketch, in the Excursions volume, stands midway between the two.

with much of wild, original nature still remaining in him." Hawthorne added, with that fine blending of humor, justice, and critical power which he could use in so masterly a way: "It may well be that such a sturdy, uncompromising person is fitter to meet occasionally in the open air than to have as a permanent guest at table and fireside."

Thoreau's poems.

This quaint man is represented at his best by his little poem on "Smoke":

Light-winged smoke! Icarian bird,
Melting thy pinions in thy upward flight;
Lark without song, and messenger of dawn,
Circling above the hamlets as thy nest;
Or else, departing dream, and shadowy form
Of midnight vision, gathering up thy spirits;
By night star-veiling, and by day
Darkening the light and blotting out the sun;
Go thou, my incense, upward from this hearth,
And ask the gods to pardon this clear flame.

Some of those who felt the Transcendental influence could certainly paint word-pictures of nature in a way of which a Greek need not have been ashamed. Of Thoreau's little list of printed poems "Smoke in Winter" is somewhat inferior, and the pieces on "Mist" and "Haze" much inferior. In the four stanzas called "The Fisher's Boy" is one half-pathetic quatrain:

I have but few companions on the shore:
They scorn the strand who sail upon the sea;
Yet oft I think the ocean they 've sailed o'er
Is deeper known upon the strand to me.

Was Thoreau a poet? Yes, in thought; in such scanty poetic utterances as this; and, outside

the poetic art, in not infrequent prose passages of an essentially poetic character. Take up and read almost at random some pages from Thoreau's essay on "Wild Apples"—an essay which fairly represents the man as he was, and his average work, and see how he found poetry and loveliness in one of New England's poorest and scrubbiest things:

Though these are indigenous, like the Indians, I doubt whether they are any hardier than those backwoodsmen among the apple-trees, which, though descended from cultivated stock, plant themselves in distant fields and forests, where the soil is favorable to them. I know of no trees which have more difficulties to contend with, and which more sturdily resist their foes. These are the ones whose story we have to tell. It oftentimes reads thus: "Wild Apples."

Near the beginning of May, we notice little thickets of apple-trees just springing up in the pastures where cattle have been,—as the rocky ones of our Easterbrooks country, or the top of Nobscot Hill, in Sudbury. One or two of these perhaps survive the drought an ' other accidents, —their very birthplace defending them against the encroaching grass and some other dangers, at first.

In two years' time 't had thus
  Reached the level of the rocks,
Admired the stretching world,
  Nor feared the wandering flocks.

But at this tender age
  Its sufferings began:
There came a browsing ox
  And cut it down a span.

This time, perhaps, the ox does not notice it amid the grass; but the next year, when it had grown more stout, he recognizes it for a fellow-emigrant from the old coun-

try, the flavor of whose leaves and twigs he well knows; and though at first he pauses to welcome it, and expresses his surprise, and gets for answer, "The same cause that brought you here brought me," he nevertheless browses it again, reflecting, it may be, that he has some title to it.

Thus cut down annually, it does not despair; but, putting forth two short twigs for every one cut off, it spreads out low along the ground in the hollows or between the rocks, growing more stout and scrubby, until it forms, not a tree as yet, but a little pyramidal, stiff, twiggy mass, almost as solid and impenetrable as a rock. Some of the densest and most impenetrable clumps of bushes that I have ever seen, as well on account of the closeness and stubbornness of their branches as of their thorns, have been these wild-apple scrubs. They are more like the scrubby fir and black spruce on which you stand, and sometimes walk, on the tops of mountains, where cold is the demon they contend with, than any thing else. No wonder they are prompted to grow thorns at last, to defend themselves against such foes. In their thorniness, however, there is no malice, only some malic acid.

Could we ask for a more loyal, a more affectionately minute friendliness for the homeliest and forlornest things in nature? Here is no White of Selborne, amid "field paths and green lanes" of moist England, but a Yankee son of the cold New England soil, and lover of every thing that grows thereon. Again:

In the fields only are the sours and bitters of Nature appreciated; just as the wood-chopper eats his meal in a sunny glade, in the middle of a winter day, with content, basks in a sunny ray there and dreams of summer in a degree of cold which, experienced in a chamber, would make a student miserable. They who are at work abroad are not cold, but rather it is they who sit shivering in

houses. As with temperatures, so with flavors; as with cold and heat, so with sour and sweet. This natural raciness, the sours and bitters which the diseased palate refuses, are the true condiments. Let your condiments be in the condition of your senses. To appreciate the flavor of these wild apples requires vigorous and healthy senses, *papillæ* firm and erect on the tongue and palate, not easily flattened and tamed. From my experience with wild apples, I can understand that there may be reason for a savage's preferring many kinds of food which the civilized man rejects. The former has the palate of an out-door man. It takes a savage or wild taste to appreciate a wild fruit. What a healthy out-of-door appetite it takes to relish the apple of life, the apple of the world, then!

Thoreau here, as in not a few other passages in his books, was describing his own tastes and writing his autobiography. He hunted out and relished things that had the "natural raciness, the sours and bitters" of life. His vigorous and healthy senses appreciated the flavor of the wild apples that grew on the central tree of Nature's Eden. He was at one with the savage in "preferring many kinds of food which the civilized man rejects." He had the "palate of an out-door man," plus the brain and wide thought of the reading man, the graduate of a college. His wild taste appreciated wild fruit, but, unlike the savage, he could frame and print words which told the cultured world of attractive things it had passed by. Here was "a healthy out-of-door appetite" in a book-maker and sight-seer, and we are given the benefit of his wanderings and close observations. At length we catch his enthusiasm, if we lacked it

before, and enjoy with him even the "frozen-thawed" apple of a winter on Massachusetts Bay, exclaiming with him, and thinking of his own books the while: "What are the imported half-ripe fruits of the torrid South, to this fruit matured by the cold of the frigid North? These are those crabbed apples with which I cheated my companion, and kept a smooth face that I might tempt him to eat. Now we both greedily fill our pockets with them, —bending to drink the cup and save our lappets from overflowing juice,—and grow more social with their wine. Was there one that hung so high and sheltered by the tangled branches that our sticks could not dislodge it? It is a fruit never carried to market, that I am aware of,—quite distinct from the apple of the markets, as from dried apples and cider,—and it is not every winter that produces it in perfection."

Not many literary tasks are easier than to write a pretty good article about the fields, forests, or mountains, the rivers, lakes, or sea, the squirrels or the birds. But to describe nature in a masterly way, to "win the secret of a weed's plain heart," to discover what the primrose really means, to watch the growth-spirit "climb to a soul in grass and flowers"—all this is given to few men of letters. In American poetry we find most of our good writing on out-door themes; our prosers have not so excelled in this branch of literature. Scattered words, in metre or in prose, contain the greater part of our under-the-sky poetry or wisdom; this, indeed, is what we might expect, for is not

Nature a being of many and fleeting moods, not easily to be caught, or not to be enjoyed for long?

Thoreau stands by himself; it is hardly worth while to mention others in his company. Perhaps, by and by, John Burroughs will enjoy a similar but lesser renown; nowadays he has almost as many readers as his great predecessor, and is, to a large part of our reading public, the best known essayist on natural themes. His cheery-titled books: "Wake-Robin," "Winter Sunshine," "Locusts and Wild Honey," "Birds and Poets," "Fresh Fields," invite the perusal of chapters which, while they lack Thoreau's quaintness, creative power, transcendental insight, *tang*, are yet the work of a watchful observer, who lives with, and almost for, the birds and the fields. Burroughs does not annoy us with the cantankerousness and semi-selfishness which sometimes peer unpleasantly from the pages of Thoreau. He feels and he thinks, but as a guide to "fresh fields and pastures new" he is of a sunny and not aggressively individual temper. His special merit is that of a chronicler of bird-ways. The American wood-singers have been fortunate in their friends; one or two other writers, besides the technical ornithologists not properly men of letters, have written their biographies in that sympathetic manner which belongs distinctly to the nineteenth century.

John Burroughs, b. 1837.

Before turning to the field of American criticism, I mention the work of a writer still living in the fulness of his literary powers: Charles Dudley Warner, humorist, essayist, trav-

Charles Dudley Warner, b. 1829.

eller, biographer, juvenile writer, and editor. Warner is chiefly, one might almost say always, the essayist. His humor is not wit; he pleases by the diffused light which illuminates his writings on various themes, not by any startling or sensational effect. American humor, as displayed in his masterpiece, "My Summer in a Garden," is shown in its better estate. Warner's intellectual kinship is with Irving, Curtis, and Holmes, not with Artemus Ward or Mark Twain,—though he wrote a book in collaboration with the last-named popular writer. Truth and wholesomeness, a genuine local flavor without coarseness, and a power to amuse without conspicuous effort,—these qualities one finds in his graceful papers. Delicacy of touch, as seen in his work, is after all the prevalent characteristic of the really representative American humorous essayists, the men who, like Warner, have actually contributed to literature. Those in search of rude and clownish "merriment," may not appreciate the fact at the present time, but the future may be trusted to emphasize the truth of the statement.

American criticism.

It would at first seem as though the department of criticism, to which we now turn, could have received slight development within the brief period of the history of American literature. Criticism did not exist in this country during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, nor did it make much showing until the nineteenth century was well advanced. In the first quarter of that century newspapers multiplied and a few reviews appeared; Irving and his fellows put forth some

work in which a quasi-critical spirit was noticeable; but not before 1840 did genuine, strong criticism begin to take its place in American letters. It could hardly do so at an earlier time. Roughly speaking, the whole history of American poetry, of any high order, is of no more remote a date than the year (1835) which has been set as the beginning of the Victorian literature. Criticism is not a thing that can anticipate creation, and certainly it is remarkable that it appeared so soon. Had the United States been a new country, speaking a language not yet developed into literary forms, the interval between the appearance of the good poem and the good essay would have been far longer than it was. But, notwithstanding humble colonialism and aggressive and sensitive young nationalism, of course the culture of England was, and had been, an American birthright. England, too, was beginning to feel, in *belles-lettres* and in thought, a new Continental influence—that of Germany; therefore America might readily, at the beginning of her age of literary criticism, enjoy the help of the same new force.

I do not think that the service of Longfellow, in this matter of the development of American criticism and culture, has ever been sufficiently recognized. As a poet, he has been and still is the most popular of American writers. As a romancer, and even as a writer of sketches of travel, he has his smaller public of appreciative readers. We do not, however, often think of him as a promoter of culture, of the knowledge of general European literature, and therefore of the incipient

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1807–1882.

critical spirit in the United States. In regard to these things it may be doubted whether we owe more to any other man. Longfellow was of academic training; he had occupied a professor's chair in two of the principal colleges of New England; he had lived in Europe for a considerable time, familiarizing himself with the Old World's history, legends, romance, scenery, and men and women. Few Americans were so well acquainted with the literatures of France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. His spirit was gentle and sympathetic, inclining him to studies of a broad range. Certainly he was no scholastic iconoclast, but the very tenderness of his mind made him catholic-tempered. Breadth and catholicity of real knowledge were precisely the things of which America stood in need in the decade after 1830. It had reaped whatever benefits were to come from young national virility, positiveness, activity, bigotry; and it was beginning to be stirred by a craze for a hundred *isms* and fresh reforms, good, bad, and ridiculous. But abolitionism, teetotalism, Fourierism, Millerism, Mormonism, hydropathy, homœopathy, Swedenborgianism, could hardly promote that wide and deep culture too long delayed in America, any more than Calvinism or the Declaration of Independence had promoted it. A sentimental period, in 1830, was just at hand, a period for which real culture feels a not unnatural disgust. "O youth and innocence! O milk and water!" exclaimed the cynical Byron. Youth and innocence are the best and brightest things; but they are not synonymous with literary insipidity and

artificiality. Longfellow, the poet of sympathy, yet the well-equipped scholar, was the very man to influence American literature in a wholesome way.

The influence exerted by Longfellow was a broad and general one, not sharply to be separated into divisions of original verse, translation, fiction, or essay. It began when, in 1830, he put forth at Bowdoin College his "Novelas Españolas" and "Manuel de Proverbes Dramatiques"; nor had it ceased when, in 1882, appeared "In the Harbor" (poems), the second part of his collection called "Ultima Thule." We shall have further occasion to study its methods and effects in other lines; in this place, setting aside the poetry, the romance "Hyperion," and the story "Kavanagh," we take up "Outre-Mer" and the little collection of essays called "Drift-Wood."

"Outre-Mer."

When "Outre-Mer" appeared, in 1834 and 1835, European travel was still uncommon among Americans. A few more ambitious graduates were able to put "P. D. Gött." after their names, and an occasional George Ticknor could boast the acquaintance of the leaders of contemporary English literature. But a trip to Britain or the Continent was so rare that it was frequent to follow it by a bit of book-making, generally of the rhapsodical or diaristic style. Nearly all of these early books of travel have gone to the oblivion they richly deserved, after performing their humble work of instruction or amusement. "Outre-Mer" was a volume of a different class. It has lived, and is still occasionally read; it would doubtless have

kept a place in literature even had it not boasted the name of an author afterward famous in other and higher work. To go with any intelligent traveller to such places as Longfellow describes: to a Norman diligence, to Auteuil, or Père la Chaise, or the valley of the Loire; to travel in his kindly company to Rome in midsummer, or a Spanish village, was pleasant and profitable. But Longfellow offered more than chronicles or diaries; he introduced to readers not over-familiar with such themes, the "Devotional Poetry of Spain," "Ancient Spanish Ballads," and "The Trouvères." On his pages appear the landscapes and the men of France, Spain, and Italy; but their spirit is made more prominent than their merely external and picturesque characteristics. To the literary papers this remark applies, of course, with even greater force. Few Americans, in 1835, knew enough to give any instruction on such themes as Longfellow had chosen; still fewer could have conveyed that instruction in a winsome way. It would be idle to call "Outre-Mer" a great book; it would be less than just to deny that, appearing when it did, it was an eminently useful one. Its sentimentality was sufficiently marked to approve it to an age in which the sway of Laura-Matilda was widespread; but that sentimentality was romantic, not silly, and led its readers toward a broader culture.

"Drift-Wood." Appended to "Outre-Mer," in the present editions of Longfellow's prose works, are eight papers to which the author gave the modest title, "Drift-Wood, a Collection of Essays."

Longfellow, at an early age, had become a contributor to *The North American Review*, which may fairly be called the best organ of periodical thought in America, notwithstanding a certain provincialism and a mutual-admiration-society tone, which used to make Poe frantic. This "Drift-Wood" collection was already familiar, in good measure, to readers of that periodical; it contains some of Longfellow's distinctly critical writing, for the most part dating from the years 1837 and 1838. Here we have a descriptive account of a poem then almost wholly unfamiliar in America, Bishop Tegnér's "Frithiof's Saga," now accessible in several translations. In a careful *North-American* essay is also given a cordial welcome to Hawthorne's "Twice-Told Tales," just a dozen years after Hawthorne and Longfellow left Brunswick in the same graduating class of Bowdoin College. Abler than either of these is the descriptive account of "Anglo-Saxon Literature" (1838). At that time "scholars" regarded Anglo-Saxon much as they regard Icelandic at the present day: not dreaming that it is simply the first English, and that without its study no intelligent knowledge of our language or literature can be attained. Long before the day of Sievers in Germany, Sweet in England, or March in America, Professor Longfellow gave an intelligent account of the literature of our remote forefathers, justly estimating its spirit and achievements, translating a few of its best passages, and making the whole essay an attractive one for necessarily ignorant readers, while he avoided undue didacticism or a patronizing tone.

Longfellow as a critic.

These papers, to which should be added the introductions to the various divisions of his edited collection devoted to "The Poets and Poetry of Europe," show very plainly the merits and limitations of Longfellow as a critic. He belonged, by nature and choice, to the expository school; he was unfitted for severe, destructive, or brilliant critical work, and his ability lay chiefly in his power to describe, justly and attractively, the things he liked. But it may be doubted whether the expository school has had a better representative in America. Longfellow liked good literature only, and therefore his kindly nature was removed from the danger of praising poor work. Too learned to commend trash, too gentle to wield a critical scourge, his work of instruction and stimulus was done at a time when it was very effective. Ridicule, satire, and stern denunciation were also needed, and they came, in due season, from other hands.

The critical work of Edgar Allan Poe, 1809–1849.

It certainly seems a long step to turn from the gentle poet, translator, romancer, essayist, and critic, whose name has just been under consideration, to Edgar Allan Poe, in whose critical papers we find one ferociously entitled "Mr. Longfellow and Other Plagiarists." The two men are in many respects extremes: in personal character, in literary methods, in the general nature of their writings, and finally in their criticisms. Longfellow introduced to Americans some of the treasures of foreign literature; Poe wrote chiefly upon his national contemporaries. Longfellow wrote gracious words of appreciation; Poe distributed praise and

blame with an impartiality that sometimes seemed random. He used to claim that Longfellow was always a New Englander, yet the writings of the latter were largely on foreign themes, while Poe, who once planned a "History of American Literature," was a Bostonian by birth, and a nationalist with some Southern proclivities, so far as his critical bias was concerned. The dissimilarity between these two men need not further be discussed. Poe, while Longfellow was benefiting our literature in one way, was aiding it in another, as will presently be seen.

The three "problematic characters" in American literature, the men whose personal qualities and whose literary work demand the most patient study and the most earnest attempt toward a just critical estimate, are Emerson, Hawthorne, and Poe. A previous chapter has considered Emerson's prose; his poems, as well as those of Poe, and, of course, all the prose writings of Poe and Hawthorne, will be taken up in detail in the later volume of this work. Poe alone requires a preliminary word in this place; it should be said, therefore, that his genius as poet and story-writer was high and true, winning an intense and apparently lasting success within narrow and rigidly marked lines of genius. His poems and tales are so different from his criticisms that there is no reason why, with this remark, the latter should not be separately considered, as indeed they must be in any record of American essays. They did a useful but irregular work, and are deeply marked by both strength and weakness.

It is idle to call Poe, as one of his biographers has

done, the most learned of American authors. In the matter of acquirements, Longfellow, to take a single name, far surpassed him. It is much nearer the truth to say, with Mr. Stedman, that he "possessed literary resources and knew how to make use of them"; that he "easily threw a glamour of erudition about his work, by the use of phrases from old authors he had read, or among whose treatises he had foraged with special design"; and that he "had little exact scholarship," but "a good reference-knowledge." To his criticisms of American and English writers he brought an unquestionable familiarity with the books discussed; an invincible courage; a hearty dislike for Bostonianism; a hatred of shams; an inability to divest himself of some personal considerations, favorable or unfavorable, affecting the authors criticised; and, in fact, a willingness to use criticism to gratify his own friendships and hatreds.

Poe's critical writing, as collected in the permanent edition of his works, consists of the following: the essays entitled "The Poetic Principle," "The Rationale of Verse," and "The Philosophy of Composition"; part of a paper called "Magazine Writing —Peter Snook"; reviews of Stephens' "Arabia Petræa," Wilmer's "Quacks of Helicon," and Irving's "Astoria"; part of his illustrated chapter on "Autographs"; the series called "The Literati," and similar short criticisms on American authors; and like papers on Mrs. Browning (then Miss Barrett, whom Poe, in one of his dedications, called "the noblest of her sex"), R. H. Horne,

Macaulay, Lever, Marryat, Cockton, and Dickens. This is a large body of writing, filling about two of the six volumes of the best (1884) edition of his works. More than sixty American authors are discussed in separate papers, besides the writers more briefly characterized in the analysis of autographs. These American criticisms naturally claim first notice here. The most obvious reflection is with reference to the poor material Poe had to handle. To read the list of names is to walk through a forlorn and neglected graveyard. Who, asks the modern reader, were George H. Colton, William Kirkland, Freeman Hunt, Piero Maroncelli, Mary Gove, Henry Cary, James Lawson, Elizabeth Bogart, Mary E. Hewitt, Rufus Dawes, Thomas Ward, William W. Lord, Henry B. Hirst, William Wallace, Why take the trouble to read and characterize the books of John W. Francis, Ralph Hoyt, Laughton Osborn, Ann S. Stephens, Caroline M. Kirkland, Prosper M. Wetmore, Epes Sargent, Elizabeth Frieze Ellet, the Davidson precocities, Estelle Anna Lewis, etc.? Almost the only names whom the average modern reader knows or cares to know are those of Channing, Cooper, Halleck, Bryant, Longfellow, Hawthorne, Lowell, and Bayard Taylor. Even Margaret Fuller, Mrs. Child, Miss Sedgwick, and Simms are more respected than read, while Willis himself, the great "sacred, passionate, and humorous" poet, seems to modern readers "something between a remembrance of Count d'Orsay and an anticipation of Oscar Wilde." * All this was not

* O. W. Holmes, "A Mortal Antipathy," p. 4.

Poe's fault; the poor man certainly raked and scraped the field of "American literature" with sufficient assiduity. If the result was not very valuable, certainly it was not alone the critic's mistake. What he said of his illustrious company of incipient celebrities and moribund mediocrities was sometimes bitter, unjust, limited in range, brightened or darkened by personal prejudices, and therefore almost as unread to-day as the books he described. But much in his method and achievement deserves grateful praise. Poe cleared the heated and unwholesome atmosphere which overhung our literature; he exposed many pretentious humbugs, who attitudinized as "men of letters," or "poetesses"; and, if we except his pseudo-critical praise of the verse of his sympathizing women-friends, and his angry screams over his men-enemies, the general average of his criticism was both intelligent and wholesome. He showed American authors and scribblers that there existed among them a critic who, though not without favor, could at least write without fear. Not all the little writers whom he denounced, passed at once from favor; but Poe's criticisms undoubtedly hastened their disappearance. As for his discussion of the greater names, such as Longfellow or Hawthorne in this country, Tennyson or Mrs. Browning in England, it was marred by the faults above mentioned; but many of its dicta, made in an early day, have been verified by later judgments of posterity. Poe seems to later critics more often right than wrong; and sometimes his analyses and prophecies were surprisingly accurate. With a mind not un-

justly priding itself upon ratiocinative power, this could hardly be otherwise.

The three papers entitled "The Poetic Principle," "The Philosophy of Composition," and "The Rationale of Verse," belong to a broader and deeper kind of criticism. Upon them Poe spent much care, re-writing and revising them in the painstaking method he so frequently applied to his poems. Their theories are not always tenable. Thus Poe's argument that a long poem is an absurdity, would do away with the "Iliad," the "Divine Comedy," "Paradise Lost," "Hamlet." The place of the lyric, whether as long as "The Ancient Mariner" or as short as Poe's own "To Helen," is certainly safe and lasting; but it is not the only kind of true poetry. Yet such an erroneous proposition as this Poe would elaborate right well. His kindred assertion that beauty is the sole end of art (sublimely true in the sense that "beauty is its own excuse for being") Poe himself modified, not only in verse but in more than one explicit statement, by the addition of the Saxon idea of Right. Indeed, his discussion of the relations between Beauty and Duty is, in the main, in full accord with the principles which have regulated English verse from Cædmon to Tennyson. Here he was trying to get down to the philosophy of poetry, as, in "The Rationale of Verse," he gave us the first elaborate American attempt to expound rhythmical science. His much-discussed analysis (in "The Philosophy of Composition") of the construction of his own poem, "The Raven," may or may not have been true; probably it was substantially

trustworthy; but in it and in these other essays he was benefiting American literature by the nature of the subjects he chose for critical discussion, and by the general method which he pursued. In these later days, certainly, there have been highly cultured critics who have wandered farther astray than did Poe, as regards both literary art and literary ethics.

Poets who have been critics.

Poets, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, have been critics as well as creators. In the elder days they used to be content to sing, but in these complex times they discuss the nature of their art, the achievements of their contemporaries, and many questions affecting literature and life. Nor is this wholly a sign of weakness; a descent from Parnassus to a lower land. The critical function is as legitimate as the creative, and in a true sense it is as high. Some criticism is creative literature in the best sense. Not until we rule out the essay as a form of literature, and not until we perform the impossible task of saying where the essay ends and criticism begins, can we degrade the latter. Again, the modern poet must himself be a man in affairs, if not of affairs; one who feels and knows the time-spirit. A third and more obvious reason why poets have so often become critics, is to be found in the development of periodical literature. The poet now has other revenues, and other means of intellectual expression, than the bound volume. Perhaps he does not write less poetry, or less valuable poetry, because he also writes prose for the magazines. He aids in his support, and meanwhile instructs the general public. If hack-work is a foe to poetry, not

less is the spirit of the amateur and the dilettant. I cannot see that Longfellow and Poe were less poets because, for instruction or for money-making, they gave us critical essays.

A similar remark could surely be made concerning the foremost American critic, James Russell Lowell, one of whose poems, indeed, bears the title "A Fable for Critics." Here are poetical thought, critical aptness, sympathy, wit, and good helpful writing, all in one. Before the reader turns to the later and weightier critical work of Lowell in prose, he finds that he has half finished this rollicking and brilliant Fable, which "reads itself," a generation after its first appearance. Lowell had almost the same material which Poe had used a few years before, and it must be confessed that he employed it to better advantage. Take at the outset what he wrote, in the following hurrying but not unjust lines, of Poe himself:

James Russell Lowell, b. 1819.

"A Fable for Critics."

There comes Poe, with his raven, like Barnaby Rudge,
Three fifths of him genius and two fifths sheer fudge,
Who talks like a book of iambs and pentameters,
In a way to make people of common-sense damn metres,
Who has written some things quite the best of their kind,
But the heart somehow seems all squeezed out by the mind.

As apt as the second line of the passage just quoted, and as fully justified by later criticism, was Lowell's estimate of Hawthorne, which, it should be remembered, deserves all the more praise because it was printed in 1848, before the appearance of "The Scarlet Letter," "The House of the Seven Gables,"

"The Blithedale Romance," or "The Marble Faun":

There is Hawthorne, with genius so shrinking and rare
That you hardly at first see the strength that is there;
A frame so robust, with a nature so sweet,
So earnest, so graceful, so solid, so fleet,
Is worth a descent from Olympus to meet;
'T is as if a rough oak that for ages had stood,
With his gnarled bony branches like ribs of the wood,
Should bloom, after cycles of struggle and scathe,
With a single anemone trembly and rathe;
His strength is so tender, his mildness so meek,
That a suitable parallel sets one to seek,—
He 's a John Bunyan Fouqué, a Puritan Tieck;
When Nature was shaping him, clay was not granted
For making so full-sized a man as she wanted,
So, to fill out her model, a little she spared
From some finer-grained stuff for a woman prepared,
And she could not have hit a more excellent plan
For making him fully and perfectly man.

All this, full of humor, and nominally put into a dramatic form, is of course genuine criticism. It took Hawthorne's readers many years, which they spent in calling him "weird" or perhaps "morbid," to discover the ethical purpose underlying the art of "Ethan Brand," "The Threefold Destiny," or "Lady Eleanore's Mantle"; but Lowell here pointed it out plainly enough, and did not forget to describe the large manliness and sympathetic womanliness of Hawthorne's genius, which, far from being morbid or abnormal, was wholesome through and through. It was just, too, to call Emerson's "a Greek head on right Yankee shoulders"; to say:

. . . some poems have welled
From those rare depths of soul that have ne'er been excelled;
They 're not epics, but that does n't matter a pin,
In creating, the only hard thing 's to begin;
A grass-blade 's no easier to make than an oak;

and to add:

In the most of his poems are mines of rich matter,
But thrown in a heap with a crush and a clatter.

Other American authors, great and small, received similar analysis; the whole, despite its rollicking style and its friendly tone, leaving upon the mind no impression that American literature in 1848 was hopelessly sentimental or likely to remain immature for too long a period. At any rate, there was enough of it to deserve the attention of a critic who knew when to denounce, when to correct, and when to praise, and who could prove, in a single work, the fallacy of the old idea that a critic is a broken-down creator. Not every writer would have either the sense or the justice to characterize himself as did Lowell in these clever lines, first, of course, printed anonymously, with the rest of the poem:

There is Lowell, who 's striving Parnassus to climb,
With a whole bale of *isms* tied together with rhyme,
He might get on alone, spite of brambles and boulders,
But he can't with that bundle he has on his shoulders.
The top of the hill he will ne'er come nigh reaching
Till he learns the distinction 'twixt singing and preaching;
His lyre has some chords that would ring pretty well,
But he 'd rather by half make a drum of the shell,
And rattle away till he 's old as Methusalem,
At the head of a march to the last new Jerusalem.

We have half forgotten the Lowell here satirized —the reformer of the days of anti-slavery, and anti-capital punishment, and Tennysonian echoes, and refined sentimentality; we know, rather, the poet of "The Vision of Sir Launfal," the satirist of "The Biglow Papers," the austere patriot of the "Commemoration Ode," and the widely-cultured critic in the editorial chair of the *North American Review.* The later Lowell became the greater because he learned to dissever his isms from his art, only supplying their place, however, by that larger spirit of liberty and loyalty to humanity which must ever inform the better books of the world.

"Conversations on Some of the Old Poets."

At first, even as a prose critic, he was touched by the sentimentality of the time in which he began his literary career. In 1844 the local bookseller in Cambridge, John Owen, who issued some of Longfellow's early books, published for Lowell a volume of "Conversations on Some of the Old Poets." The book was a 16mo, the back of which bore, in gilt, the simple title "Conversations—Lowell," as though it might be "Conversations on Personal Religion," or something similar. In the pages of the book, too, is a gently-sentimental spirit that seems archaic in comparison with that of his later prose volumes, with their brighter titles: "Fireside Travels," "Among my Books," and "My Study Windows." He would be a bold critic to-day who would undertake to set forth his views of men and books in the form of conversations or letters. The beginning of these conversations seems to belong to the eighteenth century rather than to the nineteenth:

John.—Here you are, I see, as usual, ramparted around with musty volumes of the old poets. I remember how you used to pore over them in the college library. Are you not afraid that the wheels of your mind will get choked with the dust that rises out of these dry mummy-pits?

Philip.—Even if I were to allow the justice of your last metaphor, I could reply, that the dust is at least that of kings. You must remember, also, that even this dust is not without its uses. The rich brown pigment which our painters use is made out of it;—another material illustration of the spiritual truth, that nothing which ever had a meaning for mankind loses it by the lapse of years.

John.—It may, however, become so overgrown with moss as hardly to repay the labor of the restoring chisel.

Is not this from "Conversations on Personal Religion," asks the modern reader who has read the book thus far? Not at all, for in the very next sentence John makes a remark worthy of the later Lowell: "Our modern poets seem fully aware of the fact, that what is true of one art is true also of all the others. They are as fond of using this coloring, made out of dead men's bones, as the painters. One must be turning at every other stanza to his glossary, in order to understand them, so full are they of archaisms. They seem to have plagiarized from the cheese-mongers, who inoculate their new cheeses with a bit of mould, to give them the flavor of old ones." This, written in the days of the early Tennyson, seems like a prophecy of Morris and Rossetti. It is as true and as effective as a bit from the author's later critical essays, which it also resembles in its use of a culinary metaphor, always

a favorite means of illustration in the author's books. Equally good, and applicable to many questions affecting the originality of American literature, is Philip's reply: "An imitation of style is one thing; the use of the same material is quite another. The marble of Pentelicus may be carved into other shapes as noble as the Phœbus or the Jupiter. It has no prejudice in favor of the Greek mythology; and Hiram Powers, I fancy, can persuade it to look god-like even in a coat and pantaloons. Language is the marble in which the poet carves; and, if he find that which the old poets used aptest to his hand, let him not mar his work from an idle prejudice in favor of the quarries of Berkshire or Vermont."

This is the beginning of the first of two conversations on Chaucer; the two remaining conversations are devoted to the old English dramatists, chiefly to Chapman and Ford. Everywhere is evidence of Lowell's familiarity with authors not generally known when he wrote; and his discussions often take up kindred themes all along the history of literature. Whether he was consciously influenced by Landor I do not know; but some of these criticisms have a Landorian touch, with much else, distinctly American. In reading them, Lamb's notes on the Elizabethan dramatists would occur to the mind, of course, even if Lowell did not occasionally mention them; but there is nothing save sympathy in common between him and his famous predecessor. Lowell's estimates are his own; and though, when he speaks of Chapman's essentially dull and imperfect dramas, he seems to use too laudatory language, his praise

does not rise to Lamb's extravagant heights. Neither Chapman nor Ford was commonly known in America in 1844; indeed, the first complete edition of Chapman's plays was not printed in London until 1873; so that Lowell's accounts performed, for American readers, a service similar to that done in England by the old *Retrospective Review*. Some general culture was also imparted meanwhile; let us not forget that, even as late as forty years ago, the country was in real need of literary instruction. A second series of these "Conversations" was planned but never written; though the work was virtually continued in the author's later criticisms printed in *The North American Review* and *The Atlantic Monthly*, and reissued in his last three volumes of prose.

Lowell's literary life has always been connected with the higher periodical press; in 1843, when four years out of college, he edited, with Robert Carter, a monthly magazine called *The Pioneer*, which died after three numbers. Nothing but honor, however, should be bestowed upon a young writer who, at twenty-four, could edit a magazine, a single issue of which could proffer such a list of original articles as that in the number for February, 1843. Here are "The Hall of Fantasy," by Nathaniel Hawthorne; Lenore, by Edgar Allan Poe; "Song-Writing," by James R. Lowell; "To M. O. S.," by the same; and "Lines Written in the Book of a Friend," by J. G. Whittier; besides contributions from J. S. Dwight, John Neal, and T. W. Parsons. Surely American literature in the true sense was in existence, though the fact was not known to all, hardly

to Hawthorne, Whittier, Poe, and Lowell themselves. The next, and final, number of *The Pioneer* offered, among other things, "The Birthmark," by Hawthorne, "Notes upon English Verse," by Poe, and "The Maiden's Death," by Elizabeth B. Barrett, author of "The Seraphim," etc. "After this creditable begining of editorial work, Mr. Lowell more than once continued to labor regularly in the field of periodical literature, first as editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, and afterwards as one of the conductors of *The North American Review*. To the pages of those well-known Boston periodicals, as has been stated, he contributed, with or without his name, most of the papers upon which his critical reputation rests. A good part of the volume called "Fireside Travels" (1864) had first appeared in *Putnam's Monthly*, New York, founded and at first edited by Lowell's lifelong friend, Charles Frederick Briggs, to whom he dedicated "A Fable for Critics," and one of the two volumes of the first collected edition of his poems. This "Fireside Travels" book, with its humorous description of a trip to Moosehead Lake, its gentle reminiscences of the Cambridge of the author's youth, etc., belongs to the division of miscellaneous essays, rather than to that of criticism. It is a pleasant book, making modest claims, and fulfilling them.

"Among my Books"; "My Study Windows."

Lowell's critical writings, so far as he cares to preserve them, are contained in the first and second series of "Among my Books" (1870 and 1875), and "My Study Windows," (1871). The three volumes are practically a single

work, though, the last-named contains several miscellaneous and shorter papers. Summarizing them by topics, that we may compare their range with that of the critical writings of Longfellow and Poe, we find a range broader and a quantity much greater than in Longfellow's similar work; and, as against Poe's, a broader range and a quantity about equal. Lowell turns to old English literature with a zest not shared by either of these his contemporaries, and predecessors in critical writing. Thus, in English literature alone he writes of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth, Keats, Carlyle, and Swinburne; while in the American division we have an analysis of Puritan character and of witchcraft, besides essays on Emerson, Thoreau, James Gates Percival, Josiah Quincy (president of Harvard), and Abraham Lincoln. Germany is represented by Lessing, France by Rousseau, and Italy by Dante; and if we add to this choice catalogue such essays as "My Garden Acquaintance," "A Good Word for Winter," and the one entitled, "On a Certain Condescension in Foreigners," we perceive the breadth and value of the writer's work, for we know, in advance, that he has something to say, and can say it wisely and wittily.

In these papers it is evident that the author possesses the catholic taste, the power of insight, and the originality and independence of utter- A true critic. ance which should characterize the true critic. In such a case as that of Thoreau, for instance, he sharply combats the prevalent idea concerning the writings of the author in question. No such keen analysis of Tho-

reau's defective character had been made in a circle which, despite its commanding place in American literature, was, in fact, somewhat obnoxious to Poe's old charge of mutual-admirationism. Sympathy and wit combine in the review of the young Swinburne's tragedies, in the notices of various writers included in the Library of Old Authors, and in the discussions of Chaucer, Pope, and Shakespeare. Some years since, an industrious and acute writer, in a series of papers on Mr. Lowell's prose, subjected these volumes to minutely searching tests. His aim was to prove that their author was frequently inconsistent; that, notwithstanding his scholarly equipment, his place in a college faculty, and his fondness for verbal discussions, he was sometimes inelegant or even ungrammatical; and that he too often introduced illustrations or collateral statements that were confusing, non-pertinent, and ungraceful. I must say that it seems to me that Dr. Wilkinson, this critic of a critic, made out his case. But the reader of Lowell, though he admit all that was charged, finds his pleasure little diminished. The very faults named are results of Lowell's mental alertness, and wit not easily kept within limits. Rude and homely as his illustrations sometimes are, at least they illustrate. As for consistency, all great authors approximate toward it, but do not reach it. Emerson refuses to be "the slave of his yesterdays"; and Walt Whitman, in one of his best *mots*, declares: "You say I am not consistent with myself; very well, I am not consistent with myself." Lowell the critic, like Lowell the poet, has moods, and now

emphasizes one side of the statue, now the other; but of the essential unity and helpful work of his critical writings there can be little question.

Are citations desirable, that his merits, defects, and limits may be made more clear? His essays do not furnish nuggets of gold, like Carlyle's; philosophic dicta, like Emerson's; brilliant antitheses, like Macaulay's. Nor does one greatly surpass another—save that the youthful "Conversations on the Old Poets" are inferior to the maturer volumes. The sum and nature of Lowell's critical writing are as fairly indicated by some of his latest words as by the re-reading of his series of prose works. He is speaking of the general theme of most of his essays, namely, of books: *

Lowell on literature.

> The riches of scholarship, the benignities of literature, defy fortune and outlive calamity. They are beyond the reach of thief or moth or rust. As they cannot be inherited, so they cannot be alienated. But they may be shared, they may be distributed, and it is the object and office of a free public library to perform these beneficent functions.
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> "Books," says Wordsworth, "are a real world," and he was thinking, doubtless, of such books as are not merely the triumphs of pure intellect, however supreme, but of those in which intellect infused with the sense of beauty aims rather to produce delight than conviction, or, if conviction, then through intuition rather than formal logic, and, leaving what Donne wisely calls—
>
> Unconcerning things, matters of fact,
>
> to science and the understanding, seeks to give ideal expression to those abiding realities of the spiritual world

* Address at the dedication of the public library in Chelsea, Massachusetts, Dec. 22, 1885.

for which the outward and visible world serves at best but as the husk and symbol. Am I wrong in using the word *realities?* wrong in insisting on the distinction between the real and the actual? in assuming for the ideal an existence as absolute and self-subsistent as that which appeals to our senses, nay, so often cheats them, in the matter of fact? How very small a part of the world we truly live in is represented by what speaks to us through the senses, when compared with that vast realm of the mind which is peopled by memory and imagination and with such shining inhabitants! These walls, these faces, what are they in comparison with the countless images, the innumerable population which every one of us can summon up to the tiny show-box of the brain, in material breadth scarce a span, yet infinite as space and time? And in what, I pray, are these we gravely call historical characters, of which each new historian strains his neck to get a new and different view, in any sense more real than the personages of fiction? Do not serious and earnest men discuss *Hamlet* as they would Cromwell or Lincoln? Does Cæsar, does Alaric hold existence by any other or stronger tenure than the Christian of Bunyan or the Don Quixote of Cervantes or the *Antigone* of Sophocles? Is not the history which is luminous because of an indwelling and perennial truth to nature, because of that light which never was, on land or sea, really *more* true, in the highest sense, than many a weary chronicle with names, date, and place, in which "an Amurath to Amurath succeeds"? Do we know as much of any authentic Danish prince as of *Hamlet?* . . .

Have you ever rightly considered what the mere ability to read means? That it is the key that admits us to the whole world of thought and fancy and imagination; to the company of saint and sage, of the wisest and the wittiest at their wisest and wittiest moment? That it enables us to see with the keenest eyes, hear with the finest ears, and listen to the sweetest voices of all time?

More than that, it annihilates time and space for us; it revives for us without a miracle the Age of Wonder, endowing us with the shoes of swiftness and the cap of darkness, so that we walk invisible like fern seed and witness unharmed the plague at Athens or Florence or London; accompanying Cæsar on his marches, or look in on Catiline in council with his fellow conspirators, or Guy Fawkes in the cellar of St. Stephen's. We often hear of people who will descend to any servility, submit to any insult, for the sake of getting themselves or their children into what is euphemistically called good society. Did it ever occur to them that there is a select society of all the centuries to which they and theirs can be admitted for the asking—a society, too, which will not involve them in ruinous expense and still more ruinous waste of time and health and faculties?

Southey tells us that, in his walk one stormy day, he met an old woman, to whom, by way of greeting, he made the rather obvious remark that it was dreadful weather. She answered, philosophically, that, in her opinion, "*any* weather was better than none!" I should be half inclined to say that any reading was better than none, allaying the crudeness of the statement by the Yankee proverb, which tells us that, though "all deacons are good, there 's odds in deacons." Among books, certainly there is much variety of company, ranging from the best to the worst, from Plato to Zola, and the first lesson in reading well is that which teaches us to distinguish between literature and merely printed matter. The choice lies wholly with ourselves. We have the key put into our hands; shall we unlock the pantry or the oratory? There is a Wallachian legend which, like most of the figments of popular fancy, has a moral in it. One Bakála, a good-for-nothing kind of fellow in his way, having had the luck to offer a sacrifice especially well pleasing to God, is taken up into heaven. He finds the Almighty sitting in something like the best room of a

Wallachian peasant's cottage—there is always something profoundly pathetic in the homeliness of the popular imagination, forced, like the princess in the fairy tale, to weave its semblance of gold tissue out of straw. On being asked what reward he desires for the good service he has done, Bakála, who had always passionately longed to be the owner of a bagpipe, seeing a half-worn-out one lying among some rubbish in a corner of the room, begs eagerly that it may be bestowed on him. The Lord, with a smile of pity at the meanness of his choice, grants him his boon, and Bakála goes back to earth delighted with his prize. With an infinite possibility within his reach, with the choice of wisdom, of power, of beauty at his tongue's end, he asked according to his kind, and his sordid wish is answered with a gift as sordid. Yes, there is a choice in books as in friends, and the mind sinks or rises to the level of its habitual society—is subdued, as Shakespeare says of the dyer's hand, to what it works in. Cato's advice, *cum bonis ambula*, consort with the good, is quite as true if we extend it to books, for they, too, insensibly give away their own nature to the mind that converses with them. They either beckon upwards or drag down. And it is certainly true that the material of thought reacts upon the thought itself. Shakespeare himself would have been commonplace had he been paddocked in a thinly shaven vocabulary; and Phidias, had he worked in wax, only a more inspired Mrs. Jarley. A man is known, says the proverb, by the company he keeps, and not only so, but made by it. Milton makes his fallen angels grow small to enter the infernal council-room, but the soul, which God meant to be the spacious chamber where high thoughts and generous aspirations might commune together, shrinks and narrows itself to the measure of the meaner company that is wont to gather there, hatching conspiracies against our better selves. We are apt to wonder at the scholarship of the men of three centuries ago, and at a certain dignity of

phrase that characterizes them. They were scholars, because they did not read so many things as we. They had fewer books, but these were of the best. Their speech was noble, because they lunched with Plutarch and supped with Plato. We spend as much time over print as they did, but instead of communing with the choice thoughts of choice spirits, and unconsciously acquiring the grand manner of that supreme society, we diligently inform ourselves, and cover the continent with a network of speaking wires to inform us, of such inspiring facts as that a horse belonging to Mr. Smith ran away on Wednesday, seriously damaging a valuable carryall; that a son of Mr. Brown swallowed a hickory-nut on Thursday; and that a gravel bank caved in and buried Mr. Robinson alive on Friday. Alas, it is we ourselves that are getting buried alive under this avalanche of earthy impertinences! It is we who, while we might each in his humble way be helping our fellows into the right path, or adding one block to the climbing spire of a fine soul, are willing to become mere sponges saturated from the stagnant goose-pond of village gossip.

One is sometimes asked by young people to recommend a course of reading. My advice would be that they should confine themselves to the supreme books in whatever literature, or, still better, to choose some one great author, and make themselves thoroughly familiar with him. For, as all roads lead to Rome, so do they likewise lead away from it, and you will find that, in order to understand perfectly and weigh exactly any vital piece of literature, you will be gradually and pleasantly persuaded to excursions and explorations of which you little dreamed when you began, and will find yourselves scholars before you are aware. For, remember that there is nothing less profitable than scholarship for the mere sake of scholarship, nor any thing more wearisome in the attainment. But the moment you have a definite aim, attention is quickened—the mother of memory—and all that you ac-

quire groups and arranges itself in an order that is lucid because everywhere and always it is in intelligent relation to a central object of constant and growing interest. This method also forces upon us the necessity of thinking, which is, after all, the highest result of all education. For what we want is not learning, but knowledge; that is, the power to make learning answer its true end as a quickener of intelligence, and a widener of our intellectual sympathies.

I have quoted at length these incisive words, not to illustrate anew the breadth of Lowell's range—from Shakespeare to the daily newspaper, from Plato to Cervantes, from Bunyan to Zola;—but rather to show how, in a manner characteristic of Anglo-Saxon New England, all this learning and wit, all this service to books and culture, is also made a service to the American commonweal. "Is not American public spirit," says Mr. Lowell, in conclusion, "a natural evolution from that frame of mind in which New England was colonized, and which found expression in these grave words of Robinson and Brewster: 'We are knit together as a body in a most strict and sacred bond and covenant of the Lord, of the violation of which we make great conscience, and by virtue whereof we hold ourselves strictly tied to all care of each other's good, and of the whole.' Let us never forget the deep and solemn import of these words. The problem before us is to make a whole of our many discordant parts, and I know of no way in which this can be better done than by providing a common system of education, and a common door of access to the best books by which that education may be continued, broadened,

and made fruitful. For it is certain that, whatever we do or leave undone, those discordant parts and foreign elements are to be, whether we will or no, members of that body which Robinson and Brewster had in mind, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, for good or ill."

No "school" of criticism in America.

Some such general purpose as this, so well stated by Lowell, is all that the American literary critic can set before him. To spread culture, or to aid learning in some especial field, must be his mission. American criticism is not yet so old or so wide-reaching as to boast any conspicuous "schools." Those who contribute to this division of intellectual labor must, to a large extent, follow individual lines of preference and learning. This isolation of American critics is, on the whole, a decided advantage. Indeed, in the general field of American literature there is hardly a "school," save that of which Emerson is the recognized head. A certain similarity of purpose and plan bound together Emerson and the lesser Transcendentalists who wrote for the pages of *The Dial* magazine. But in criticism this similarity was not very great. They liked Goethe and Carlyle, they preferred subjective literature to objective, and they hailed any marked manifestation of the "time-spirit" in its more ideal exhibitions. The general attitude of Amos Bronson Alcott toward books and literature has been substantially that of Emerson. In the various works of this kindly man are many valuable characterizations and analyses of books and their authors. Alcott, like Southey, is a lover of books as well as a student of

Amos Bronson Alcott, b. 1799.

them, and the appreciation of discriminated books has no better illustration than in the various passages in his writings. In the volumes written by Mr. Alcott, and gathered from manuscript years after the pages were penned,—in his "Tablets," "Concord Days," "Records of a School," and other reported conversations,—we find the discursive method of Emerson carried one step further, and note a sententiousness and an eccentricity and an obscurity which seem more marked than the corresponding qualities in Emerson himself. Mr. Alcott has been, by conviction and by profession, a talker; his conversations, held for many years in various states, have been his own in method and achievement. Much of their strength has vanished with the spoken word; not a little remains in his heterogeneous volumes, on life, duty, the environment, philosophy, religion, immortality. Their critical parts expound by insight and quick "oracular" utterance, and the literary seed sown broadcast by this quaint and kindly teacher has often fallen on fertile soil.

Two other writers, critics by profession, bore the Concord Transcendental influence out into the world. George Ripley, 1802–1880. Emerson the lecturer, in his comments on "Representative Men," in his addresses on John Brown, Thoreau, Lincoln, or other contemporaries, or in his studies of "English Traits," was of course possessed of the critical faculty, and was ever loyal to the principles which his Brook Farm admirers or Concord disciples professed. Hawthorne, with his insight, sympathy, humor, and breadth of thought, was sometimes a critical observer whom

one might reverence or fear. But book-reviewing was of course far from the literary aims of either Emerson or Hawthorne, neither of whom set the critical faculty before him as the leading influence in his life-work. Hawthorne's aloofness made him an observer at Concord—even of Emerson—rather than a promoter of Concord principles as applied to criticism, philosophy, and life. Mr. Alcott's serene life was spent in unworldly studies in Concord itself or in holding "conversations" untrammelled by the choice of subject, or the method of treatment, by which the professional critic must so often be limited. This or that young man who had early shared the influences and enthusiams of Concord and Brook Farm, which the critic Lowell had studied at a safe distance, went out into the world, like George William Curtis or Charles A. Dana, and found his early life but a cheering memory or a faded dream. It was reserved for two of those who had felt and shared the New England Transcendental renaissance to continue to apply its leading principles to literary work, chiefly in a critical line. These two were George Ripley and Margaret Fuller.

The long career of George Ripley was certainly a curious one, and one hardly likely to be paralleled in another country than America, or in America at another period. Born in 1802, within the decade which gave American literature so many names destined to be famous, Ripley duly graduated at Harvard College and its divinity school, according to the fashion in vogue among not a few of the bright young men of Massachusetts. Like Emerson, he

preached in a Boston Unitarian church for a few years, displaying increasingly radical tendencies. Afterwards he travelled in Europe; familiarized himself with French and German literature when Germany was beginning to affect English and American thought; and edited, and thereby popularized, quite a library of translated specimens of foreign standard literature. He also shared in the writing of the controversial theological books which were so numerous in Massachusetts between 1820 and 1840; was an editor of *The Dial;* and was next the leading spirit in the Brook Farm community at West Roxbury, until its preconcerted death in 1846. For nearly a quarter of a century he had been active in religious, philosophical, and socialistic work in Boston and its vicinity, without leaving behind him any lasting results in church, community, or literature. Next, at the age of forty-five, he removed to New York and became associated with Horace Greeley in the conduct of the *New York Tribune.* The atmosphere of the office was congenial; Fourierite and other advanced religious, social, and political principles were welcomed or perhaps advocated by more than one of the conductors of the famous newspaper; and the very reasons that gave Dr. Ripley his place also gave him freedom in expressing his opinions. Then began his uninterrupted service to the *Tribune* as literary editor, until the time of his death in 1880. For thirty-three years, in the most productive period in the history of American literature, he wrote criticisms on hundreds and thousands of books, passing in procession before his eye. American "book-re-

Viewing" can show no parallel record of faithful service for a third of a century; and the influence exerted by Dr. Ripley was naturally great. To many readers he still seems the one American critic, by reason of seniority, and perhaps by reason of quality of work. One of the more conspicuous of American contemporary men of letters, himself critic as well as poet, expresses his sense of Dr. Ripley's services toward his country's literature by offering a volume, in sincere dedicatory compliment, "to George Ripley, LL.D., whose judgment, learning, and professional devotion have contributed to the advancement of criticism, and furnished an enviable example to men of letters."

And yet, it seems to me, one can hardly assign to this veteran American critic a high or permanent place in our literary history. He was equipped with a wide knowledge, including philosophy and theology, as well as *belles-lettres;* contemporary European literature was familiar to him; his tastes and sympathies were, as a rule, both kindly and catholic; he had few hobbies to ride or rancors to exhibit; no trace of embittering personal disappointment appeared in his reviews; and he did not yield, so far as I know, to individual dislikes or petty spites. But his critical work could not be compared, in merit, with that of such an essayist as Mr. Lowell, nor with the unsigned and unrecognized reviews of some less known writers. It lacked grasp; the points Dr. Ripley sought to make must be found by the reader at some cost of time and trouble. His writing was, as a rule, diffuse; terse or remarkable

characterizations were lacking; nor did one often find a sentence that went straight to the heart of a book. Dr. Ripley was considered to have an unusual ability as a summarizer of the books he reviewed, but summarizing, by paraphrase or by scissors-work, is the easiest kind of criticism. Again, his use of adjectives was sometimes deemed a merit; but these adjectives were generally used to round out a style perpetually "balanced" or Johnsonian. The writer evidently sought to leave an impression of profundity and nice analytical power; but this impression was produced upon those who delighted in the literary habit of saying that, though B follows A in the alphabet, it undoubtedly precedes C. Dr. Ripley's reviews, as a rule, could have been divided into parallel columns, each sentence separated into halves by such words as *but, yet, though, notwithstanding*. It hardly seems a gracious task, certainly it is not a pleasant one, to point out the essential hollowness of one who, for so long a time, seemed the "Nestor of American criticism"; but it is time to try to be impartial, if we would be historical. The very qualities of mind which led to Dr. Ripley's failure to influence deeply the religious state of Boston and to perpetuate the work of Transcendentalism or Brook-Farmism, also caused his critical work to be transient in influence and somewhat superficial in character. None of his books—his successful editing of the sixteen-volume American Cyclopædia of course does not disprove the statement—shows by theme or by execution the original and forceful character of a creative mind. He never wrote his pro-

jected intellectual history of New England, which, if completed, would have possessed valuable qualities; for Dr. Ripley could truly have said *pars magna fui*, at least of the Unitarian and Transcendental movements. His best service to American literature was his kindly encouragement by criticisms which, above all things, disliked to be severe, in years when the literature of the country perhaps still needed stimulus toward a more active development. This service received during Dr. Ripley's lifetime, and should receive here, the honorable mention it deserves. It should also be said that in the somewhat brief and unfruitful history of American criticism, this writer, occupying a place of prominence, aided the development of that criticism by a serene and evenly poised mental habit, a habit none too common in a young literature.

Sarah Margaret Fuller, Marchioness Ossoli, 1810–1850.

It not infrequently happens, in these days of widely diffused knowledge, and of multiplied opportunities for intellectual labor, that a potent influence upon thought is exercised by men and women who produce no volumes of importance. Such influences, as a rule, should not be noted, or at any rate described at length, in a history of literature. Yet, in tracing the development of a thing so recent as the literature of the United States, we would go astray did we refuse to recognize and study some influences which affected the intellectual growth of the nation, though not taking permanent form within the covers of bound volumes of the highest class. Of the influence exerted by Dr. Ripley, who did not write

a single book of high rank, I have just spoken. Equally notable, though less prolonged, was that exerted by Margaret Fuller, like Ripley first a Transcendentalist, then a worker for the *New York Tribune.* From *The Dial* to a daily newspaper seems a long step; but the work of Ripley and Miss Fuller was aided by their willingness to earn a living in an honorable employment, and therein to spread more widely some of the principles they had advocated in a circle of the Transcendental elect. Few, nowadays, read the "works" of Margaret Fuller: her translation of "Eckermann's Conversations with Goethe," her unimportant "Summer on the Lakes," her more ambitious papers on "Art and Literature," or her principal book, "Woman in the Nineteenth Century." We cannot say that these papers have fallen out of public notice because they were collected from the pages of periodicals; surely a previous publication did not deter the public of book-readers from the writings of Emerson or Lowell, Carlyle or Macaulay. Nor can it be said that Miss Fuller's writing was of inferior merit, for some of it surpassed in value the essays and criticisms of Poe, for instance, and equalled a part of Channing's literary product. Friendly eulogists have striven to keep her character and work before the public eye; not many have been so fortunate as to be commemorated by the pen of Emerson, not to enumerate all her lesser and later biographers. In addition to this, readers of Hawthorne cannot fail to see that certain elements in the character of Zenobia, in "The Blithe-

dale Romance," correspond with some of Miss Fuller's, though, of course, it would be careless to aver that Zenobia was Margaret Fuller. Great romancers are not so clumsy as to introduce real personages into their pages, without many touches and idealizing changes.

Yet, after all that has been said of Miss Fuller by her many earnest friends, after the zealous and sometimes unseemly criticisms and defences of which she has been the subject, and after the fullest recognition of her merits, faults, and foibles, her personality and the memory of her influence are the things that interest us, not the present value of her printed pages. Her learned girlhood, her solitary ways, and her burning zeal, remind us of Mrs. Browning. As Mrs. Browning's name is first among women who have contributed to English literature, so the name of Margaret Fuller is practically the first to show the position woman has already begun to take, and must make more and more conspicuous, in the literature of America. She could understand, share, and spread the philosophical, religious, and literary opinions of Emerson; she could edit *The Dial*, the magazine in which the Transcendental spirit took form; she could rival Alcott as a leader of conversation; she could aid in the excellent movement for the popularization of German literature in America; she could prove "woman's right to labor" in the exacting toils of newspaper writing; and at last she could throw herself, heart and soul, into the early struggles toward Italian unity and freedom, in 1848 and the

following years. The parallel between Margaret Fuller and Mrs. Browning, begun in school-girl days, was continued on Italian soil; but not in the tragic water-death of the brave and wayward American. Margaret Fuller had married in Italy, late in 1847, a Marquis Giovanni Angelo Ossoli, of whose character the conflicting accounts need not be discussed here; she had worked for his country with pen and hand, at the desk and in the hospital; she had been a trusted associate of Mazzini in his labor and ambition; and she had written a chronicle of some of the scenes she had beheld and shared. Her life ended, with that of her family, in a shipwreck on the American coast, within a day's sail of home, in 1850. She had done and she had been; what she did and was we cannot forget, though we read not her books, but those of women who followed her, and who were helped toward intellectual freedom and toward the fields of literature by her pioneer toils.

"Pioneer toils"—the phrase might as well be applied to the greater part of American critical writing up to the present day. A body of critics cannot be recruited in any country while that country still lacks a literature considerable in quantity and quality. Longfellow, in his miscellaneous prose, therefore assumed the work of an instructor. One could not ask that didacticism should be more courteously and attractively veiled than in his critical essays on European literature; but it was didacticism, all the same. He was writing for the instruction of a people which included a growing

number of eager learners, but which was, for the most part, profoundly ignorant of the subjects discussed. Take, for instance, the charming and still-helpful essay on Anglo-Saxon literature. At the time of its publication there were not five men in New England who could read the Anglo-Saxon alphabet. American literary criticism had to do work even more elementary than that which fell to the lot of American scholarship. Had the little knots of men of culture, here and there throughout the United States, rested content with their own attainments, they would have ignored the duty that plainly called them, and would also have increased their own discomforts. Poe, in criticism, was an iconoclast as well as a propagandist. He ruthlessly overthrew some of the literary humbugs of his time. A recent critic has applied this severe term to Poe himself; but there is in his work enough genius to save it forever. Not so with the books of the ladies and gentlemen whom he was discussing. While Longfellow was explaining and commending the good, Poe was, in his irregular way, denouncing the pretentious and bad, in an *ex-cathedra* manner that was as harsh as Longfellow's was gentle. The work of public instruction is not so manifest, nor so much needed, in Lowell's critical writing, which has a depth and value not to be found in Ripley's or Margaret Fuller's; but the result is still that sought by the literary teacher, and Lowell's methods are consciously didactic, though not always apparently so.

This statement applies, in good measure, to the

work of other, later, and younger American critics — Save where they have written for and with European specialists of equal standing, they have necessarily joined instruction with discussion, description with analysis. Herein lies the value of the work of Edwin Percy Whipple, through many years. Because of this position of the American critic and essayist, during the last half-century, Whipple, like Lowell, did not confine himself to purely literary themes. He broadly discussed "Literature *and* Life" (the title of one of his volumes); studied "Character and Characteristic Men," and "Success and its Conditions," in many times and lands; and ranged from "The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth" to "Washington and the Principles of the Revolution," or to "Daniel Webster and Rufus Choate." With the exception of Richard Grant White, Whipple is the only writer considered in this chapter who made criticism his profession and life-work; even Mr. White's livelihood was otherwise earned, and musical criticism, as well as literary, occupied him. Whipple showed that the time had come to study books and men; to analyze character and purpose, especially in literature; and to discuss the causes and nature of literary and personal failures and successes. For this task no little discretion was required, when, in 1843, Whipple began his active work as a writer, in an article on "Macaulay." As a reviewer and lecturer, Whipple reached a public which Emerson never fully influenced; though his service in emphasizing

Edwin Percy Whipple, 1819–1886.

the value and strength of true character was in Emerson's own vein. Whipple showed his Americanism by the emphasis laid upon that element of character he called grit; and he displayed his Saxon temper in his unmitigated contempt for sham and shoddy.

The North American Review.

A considerable part of Whipple's critical writing originally appeared in *The North American Review.* The relations of that periodical to the history of critical thought in America are not to be overlooked, as regards the length and the character of its service. It was started in 1815, thirteen years after *The Edinburgh Review* and six years after *The Quarterly Review.* A critical review must have behind it a scholarly group, and such the *North American* had in the Boston gentlemen who had formed the "Anthology Club," intimately connected with a magazine called *The Monthly Anthology.* From 1815, for sixty years, though receiving some contributions from other parts of the country, the *North American* practically represented the culture which centred in Boston and Cambridge. Successive editors were William Tudor, Willard Phillips, Edward Tyrrel Channing, Richard Henry Dana, Senior, Edward Everett, Jared Sparks, Alexander H. Everett, Francis Bowen, Andrew P. Peabody, James Russell Lowell, Charles Eliot Norton, and Henry Adams. These Boston and Cambridge men wrote much for the *Review*, a single individual sometimes contributing several papers to a number. Culture and critical spirit certainly existed in a land and

in a time when a single periodical could print articles by such representative men as Everett, Sparks, and Lowell, among its editors, and Irving, Prescott, Bancroft, Motley, Parkman, Emerson, Longfellow, Holmes, and Curtis among its contributors. Their work may fairly enough be said, in the words of a later editor of the *Review*, to "represent the growth of native thought and scholarship in the United States from the close of the second war with Great Britain down to the close of the great civil war."

The *North American*, previous to its abandonment of its review character, and its assumption of its present function, that of offering a monthly batch of valuable or sensational signed pamphlets by noted men, varied in its excellence during its several decades of history. A periodical issued for more than half a century could hardly be expected, under many editors, to be of uniform value. Again, it certainly was, for the greater part of its career, the organ of a school which, in religion, society, politics, education, etc., was somewhat open to the charge of narrowness, despite its evident ability. The *North American* looked at life and letters from beneath the shade of Harvard University, the Boston State-house, or the Boston Athenæum. Even the neighboring Concord was out of its latitude, and therefore was judged from an alien and not wholly friendly point of view. But this shade, if shade it was, fell from trees that grew from a soil more truly academic and fertile, at that time, than any other the country could show. The insularity

of the *North American*, or its representative function in behalf of a limited school, was certainly no greater than that of either of its English prototypes, the one in Edinburgh or the one in London. It received literary products, and by printing and publishing them it furthered new results in its own field and elsewhere. Recognizing all its deficiencies, one may fairly say that the *North American*, on the whole, was both creditable and beneficial to American literature, almost from those early days when, in its original magazine capacity, it published Bryant's "Thanatopsis." Its book reviews, in particular, were better, between 1850 and 1870, than any regularly printed in any other American periodical. When criticism of this sort becomes excellent, one may be quite sure that it indicates the existence of an excellent general literature, near at hand.

Longfellow and Lowell were Harvard professors; Longfellow had previously held a chair in Bowdoin, a New England college of similar literary tone; Whipple was a Bostonian; Alcott a Concord man; and the *North American* thoroughly local. But when Ripley and Margaret Fuller went from Massachusetts to New York, where Poe was already at work, they signified the change, still in progress, whereby New York was to become the literary distributing centre of America, though not its literary capital, in the London or Paris sense. There Grant White, Bayard Taylor, Stoddard, and Stedman were to work in the critical field, finding in magazines and in daily newspapers

New York as a literary centre.

a regular channel for their prose. Their criticisms, and, indeed, the hack work from which the man of letters can seldom be free, did not deter Taylor, Stoddard, and Stedman from poetical composition. The divine was not lost to sight; Stedman, indeed, could find "Pan in Wall Street," and Taylor's facility could turn readily from a newspaper letter, report, or review, to a "Masque of the Gods." It was this facility which made Taylor traveller, lecturer, novelist, and newspaper man, as well as diplomat, poet, or critic; and he paid the penalty of facility even more surely than did poverty-stricken Hood or graceful Leigh Hunt. Good in all, he was supreme in none, though in poetry he was—as will be seen in a later volume of this work—almost successful in the best sense. His great "Life of Goethe" was never written; he never undertook the "History of American Literature," which his hearty and winsome personal friendships would perhaps have biassed; his valuable lectures on the Niebelungenlied, Lessing, Schiller, Goethe, Richter, and other German writers, were printed, without his designed revision, as elementary and necessarily popular "Studies in German Literature"; and the "Notes on Books and Events," which form a part of the volume called "Essays and Notes," are merely such gleanings as could be made from a thoroughly competent journalist's daily work. Admirable sometimes, well-written always, they are less partisan than Poe's, and they deal with greater authors and better books; but they are less significant, because they

Bayard Taylor, 1825-1878.

represent less fully the personality and force of the author. And yet,

> "Though the many lights dwindle to one light,
> There is help if the heavens have one";

though the life-work of this attractive personality and clever writer shrink to "The Masque of the Gods" alone, that poem would keep for him a place in our true literature. And in the single department of criticism I venture to claim for Taylor's "The Echo Club, and other Literary Diversions," notwithstanding its strange failure to win general notice, the place which belongs to the best collection of parodies written within the past half-century, and the best semi-humorous critical work in our literature, save "A Fable for Critics." He who would question so favorable an opinion, may read or re-read the rhymed review of Browning's "Inn Album" (p. 175), or "The Promissory Note" (p. 22), in parody of Poe.

The prose writings of R. H. Stoddard are widely scattered, and never have been winnowed and brought into collected form. They must be sought in the introductory pages of the many books he has edited: collections of English and American verse, libraries of *ana* or literary reminiscence, or new editions of the works of standard authors. Much of his critical work lies buried still more deeply in the files of the New York dailies, which he has served as literary editor. With an unusual acquaintance with the whole body of English and American poetry, Stoddard has

Richard Henry Stoddard, b. 1825.

been content to promote the increasing literary culture of his time, by work seemingly desultory and occasional, but in reality unremitting. I consider the best representative of his literary knowledge, critical ability, and impartiality to be the two-hundred-page introduction to the 1884 edition of Poe's works.

Richard Grant White, 1822–1885.

Richard Grant White, though at times a journalist, like all the other New York critics, Poe, Taylor, Stoddard, and Stedman, wrote for the most part in the slower manner befitting magazine essays. From *Putnam's Monthly*, *The Galaxy*, or *The Atlantic Monthly* were slowly collected the materials afterwards reshaped in his books: "Shakespeare's Scholar," "The Life and Genius of Shakespeare," "Studies in Shakespeare," "Words and their Uses," "Every-day English," "England Without and Within." White's faults as a critic were a severity sometimes amounting to ill-nature; an egotistic self-assertion that was unjust to his opponents; an inability to state fairly the other side of a question; a fondness for petty discussion; and an occasional prolixity. As a writer on Shakespeare and an editor of his works, he dwelt with increasing and one-sided force upon the defects of Shakespeare's personality, until the puzzled reader wondered how Hamlet or Juliet could be evoked from the brain of so mean a man. But White exposed and shamed many pretentious ignoramuses, Shakespearean and other; he ridiculed and routed the wretched crew of annotators, "conjectural" readers, and forgers of text; and he made very clear (es-

pecially in "The Life and Genius of Shakespeare," vol. I. of the twelve-volume edition) the true and the false in the Shakespeare life-legend. Not a philologist himself, he promoted the study of the forms and uses of words; and in general he performed a sound service to American criticism by his very cynicism and coldness. Here was a writer who could sharply challenge sentimentality and half-knowledge, within his particular field. His notes on England are much inferior to Hawthorne's or Emerson's, both in description and in analysis; and his one novel, portentously called "The Fate of Mansfield Humphreys; with the Episode of Mr. Washington Adams in England, and an Apology," is a laughable failure.

Obvious considerations might deter a historian of American literature from discussing the work and the relative rank of contemporary writers in the same historical field. I do not mean, only, that the difficulty and delicacy of criticism of living writers would be greatly augmented in such a task; that praise might seem, to the careless reader, to be the puffery of mutual-admiration; or that blame might appear, in the minds of those prejudiced to suspicion, to spring from prejudice. I have undoubtedly exposed myself already to such charges, as must every one who honestly attempts to write of the books of living authors, however sincere his desire to be just. It is enough to say that only one completed American literary history, on a large scale, as yet exists. Professor Tyler's "History of American Literature," much of which I would

heartily praise, is still so incomplete that it cannot justly be reviewed in the pages of a collateral work; and other able writers have made but fragmentary contributions to the general theme. I must pass by, therefore, the names of some who have written well or ill, laboriously or superficially, upon topics discussed in these pages. Edmund Clarence Stedman must be mentioned, however, for reasons relating to the history of American literature.

Edmund Clarence Stedman, b. 1833.

The publication of Stedman's "Victorian Poets," in 1875, and "Poets of America," in 1885, marked, it seems to me, a period in the literary progress of the country. One critical reader may honestly differ from another; and thus it seems to me that Mr. Stedman's estimate of certain authors, of Landor, Procter, Swinburne, Whitman, or Bayard Taylor, is far too high; and that he has partly failed to indicate our emergence from colonialism and provincialism, by his too kindly insertion of many names of little rhymers and "poetesses" who are beginning to be covered by the cloud of oblivion, or who have never emerged from obscurity. But in his two books, closely connected with each other, and covering the same period, we have a laborious, learned, thoughtful, and complete review of the poetical work of English-speaking authors since 1835; a review as thorough as historical writing ought to be, and in such a chapter as that on Browning, anticipating, I am sure, the ultimate verdict of the poet-artist and critic of the future.

Already the poets of whom Mr. Stedman treats have more readers in America than in England; in

eration the central powers and influences of sh thought and literature will have transferred abode to the great nation of the western . This change has not yet come, though it ıds; and it is well that American criticism ly anticipates its arrival by a grave, broad, and especting appeal to the canons of universal ture, and not by the didacticism, the small nalities, or the frantic nationalism which once thought necessary or excusable.

CHAPTER XI.

HISTORIANS.

TOWARD the close of the eighteenth century, and indeed when the nineteenth century was well advanced, there was little to indicate the commanding place to be held by American historical writing in the literature of the world. The Saxon mind is an observant one; and certainly the early English settlers in America had written sufficiently numerous and voluminous chronicles of their sight-seeings and experiences. But the admirable diaries of William Bradford, John Winthrop, and Samuel Sewall did not foretell, with any certainty, the coming of a historical literature. To be a good writer of diaries is one thing; to be a broad and able historian quite another. Pepys was not a great social analyst, nor Boswell a critical biographer. Prince's "Annals" and Stith's "History of Virginia," of all the books recorded in the chapter on "Early Descriptive and Historical Writers," were the only ones we can call precursors of Bancroft's works, or Motley's; and he would certainly be a very patriotic student who would pretend to find in them traces of the powers of a great historian. All praise, of its kind, belongs

to those who patiently treasured perishable information, or who set in order their little stock of colonial records; but their time was not ripe for the appearance of historians in the truer sense.

Nearly every one of the earliest American historical writers was a man of affairs, a participator in the deeds he described. This was specially true of Smith, Bradford, Winthrop, the Mathers, Sewall, and Stith; and the remark applies equally well to Thomas Hutchinson, whose name may stand at the chronological head of this later list. When we look at the commanding figures of the Revolutionary leaders in Massachusetts, we are inclined to forget that Hutchinson, for a considerable period, was really the "leading spirit of the Province."* It meant much, in colonial days, for a man to be member of the general court, speaker of the same, chief-justice, member of the provincial council, lieutenant-governor, and governor. Hutchinson, though a Tory, and a legal representative of the authority of the crown, was a native of Boston, a graduate of Harvard, and a genuine New-Englander. Modern readers sometimes forget that a fair share of the intelligence and conscience of the colonies, as well as of their wealth, was on the Tory side. Though Hutchinson became exceedingly, and naturally, unpopular during the patriotic American uprising in the decade before the Revolution; though his house was more than once attacked, its contents burned, and its historical collections dispersed; and though,

Thomas Hutchinson, 1711–1780.

* Hosmer, "Life of Samuel Adams," 34.

finally, Hutchinson was driven from the place of his birth, even before the guns of Lexington and Concord were fired, there is no reason why, in these dispassionate days, he should not be credited with an honest desire to do what he deemed right. Loyalty to conviction certainly cost him more than a similar fidelity to conscience cost the "traitor" Adams, or Hancock, or Otis.

Hutchinson sat in a chair occupied by Winthrop and William Shirley before him, and by John Hancock, Samuel Adams, James Sullivan, Elbridge Gerry, Edward Everett, Emory Washburn, and John A. Andrew after him. His intellectual ability was such as to make him worthy of mention in this honorable company. His "History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay," which, in its completed form, brings the story down to the very year of the author's exit from the colony, may fairly be called a praiseworthy production, even from the literary standpoint. One old book may be valuable as an original authority, another may be prized for its quaintness of autobiographical detail or social chronicle. Hutchinson's work offers something more than this, and deserves some credit for its literary style. Notwithstanding the marked political opinions of the author, one feels a confidence in his statements greater than that reposed in the writings of the professional moralist Cotton Mather. Naturally, Hutchinson never attained a tithe of the popularity enjoyed by Increase and Cotton Mather in their capacity of historians; politics had crowded literature to the

Hutchinson's "History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay."

wall, and Hutchinson was not the man to get an impartial hearing in his lifetime. But it is now apparent that he possessed an ability shared but never fully displayed by Thomas Prince: that of accumulating, studying, and assimilating historical materials, and placing them before the reader in an orderly and intelligible form. It is this ability that makes the historian; and in the maturity and thoroughness of Hutchinson's work we find the beginning of the second and principal period of historical literature in America. More than this one cannot claim; to say less than this would be injustice. In Hutchinson's diary and miscellaneous papers are sometimes to be found a loftiness of thought and a transparency of diction which are similar to the good literary qualities of the "History." Hutchinson was an aristocrat, hence he was a political failure in New England; but his aristocracy helped him win his success as a writer, because it taught him, in a time of hurry and excitement, which followed an age of Matherian, pompous half-knowledge, to be patient, serious, and just in his historical investigations, and to try to be stately and finished in verbal expression. The charge of trickiness and double-dealing, made and believed in Hutchinson's lifetime, affects his character as a man rather than as a historian. Reduced to its lowest terms, and patiently investigated, it means that Hutchinson, always a consistent Tory, wrote some things in his English letters which, very naturally, he left unsaid at home. Noble and beneficent as were the results of the Revolution to

America and the world, we are compelled to admit that, on both sides, the adaptation of means to ends was sometimes not in strict accord with the highest equity. Admitting against Hutchinson more than can be proved, his "History" remains both creditable and trustworthy, an honorable leader of an honored line.

Naturally the earlier American historians selected local themes. Documents concerning foreign topics were lacking in America; libraries were few and scantily supplied; European travel or residence involved an expense impossible for writers not diplomats as well; and the novelty and attractiveness of subjects close at hand led the first historians to address themselves to their home public. They were, for the most part, employed in other than literary tasks, and gave to writing such time as could be spared from exacting daily work. Jeremy Belknap, like so many of the American writers who were laying the foundations for a future literature, was a minister. To go to college, teach school, to study divinity, to preach, and incidentally to turn out pamphlet sermons, "poetry," or more ambitious work, was almost the rule among our early writers. Belknap's career may be summarized thus: his pastorates at Dover and Boston (where he preceded Dr. Channing in the Federal Street Church) were honorable; and though his higher literary tastes were for historical study, he would hardly have been a New England minister had he not written a theological treatise or some similar production. Thus he prepared a

Jeremy Belknap, 1744–1798.

long-titled reply to Thomas Paine and his "Age of Reason"; wrote a life of Isaac Watts; and edited a collection of psalms and hymns, some of which were original. Verse was an occasional recreation of Belknap's; and in a story called "The Foresters" he attempted, with some success, to give a semi-humorous summary of American history, by means of a cumbersome personification, one State being John Codline, another Robert Lumber, etc. Speaking of this book and the author's other work, William Cullen Bryant* too amiably declared that Belknap was "the first to make American history attractive." "His Historical Account of those Persons who have been Distinguished in America as Adventurers, Statesmen, Philosophers, Divines, Warriors, Authors, and other Remarkable Characters, Comprehending a Recital of the Events Connected with their Lives and Actions"—there were titles in those days—was a useful successor of Mather's "Magnalia," and a precursor of Sparks' "American Biography." The appearance of the word "authors" at the end of Dr. Belknap's list is of interest.

But the course of our narative of literary progress must not be turned aside by matters of no more than quaint or antiquarian concern. It is enough to say that Belknap, more than any other man, aided in the establishment of the Massachusetts Historical Society, and wrote a serviceable "History of New Hampshire." That this history, in accordance with the prevalent fashion, was also

* Quoted in Duyckinck's "Cyclopædia of American Literature," i., 265.

a gazetteer, and that it does not possess literary merit, are facts which need not blind us to its significance in the provincial period of American historical writing, so soon to give place to a time of broader and more enduring work. The chief names among those who were advancing historical investigation in the United States, at the beginning of the present century, seem to me to be those of Belknap, Abiel Holmes, and Hannah Adams in New England, and Dr. David Ramsay in South Carolina. Holmes' "American Annals, or Chronological History of America from its Discovery in MCCCCXCII to MDCCCVI," packs a large amount of well digested and conveniently arranged information within two trim volumes. "Annals," perhaps the driest form of composition, Dr. Holmes actually made interesting. Hannah Adams, who wrote as many religious books as if she were an orthodox Congregational minister of the day, prepared a "History of New England," which, in its way, though not an original authority, was as useful as Dr. Holmes' more ambitious work; its place in the development of woman's intellectual opportunities is obvious. Ramsay's historical labors were more extended than those of the New England writers just mentioned. Born in Pennsylvania, his life was spent in South Carolina; he was twice a Congressman; and his long literary career marked the modest development of general literature in the South. By tastes and habits he closely resembled the professional au-

Abiel Holmes, 1763–1837.

Hannah Adams, 1755–1831.

David Ramsay, 1749–1815.

thors of older and richer communities, or of later days in America. He was a voluminous writer on medical subjects; he treated of South Carolina history somewhat as Belknap had treated of that of the most northern of the old colonies; and his "History of the Revolution in South Carolina," and "History of the American Revolution," were based upon original documents and extended personal acquaintance with leading patriots. Similarly, the "Life of Washington" embodied the recollections of one who had been a friend of the great Virginia general and statesman. Ramsay's final achievement, posthumously published, was the twelve-volume work bearing the imposing title of "Universal History Americanized; or An Historical View of the World from the Earliest Records to the Nineteenth Century; with a Particular Reference to the State of Society, Literature, Religion, and Form of Government of the United States of America." History, and even language, had to be "Americanized" in those days; Noah Webster prepared an "*American* Dictionary of the English Language." But the triumphant patriots, at any rate, were reading; and their authors, industrious though few, were supplying them with books which, though not important as literature, were spreading popular information. If one were writing a history of intellectual progress in New England and South Carolina, perhaps the temptation to laud unduly the labors of Belknap, Holmes, Miss Adams, and Ramsay might be too strong for resistance. But as it is,

the sager reader recognizes in their industry and success, under disadvantageous circumstances, a prophecy rather than an achievement. Their books are now somewhat serviceable as side-lights on contemporary themes, and are honored as indications of the irresistible desire to study and write. Less interesting and valuable than the records of Bradford, Winthrop, and Stith on the one hand, or the later histories on the other, they instructed the general reader, and stimulated the better-equipped writer to endeavor to surpass the achievements of those who, at least, had done what lay within their power. Of the four writers, Dr. Holmes, on the whole, produced the greatest work, and Miss Adams the least.

Jared Sparks, 1789–1866.

With Jared Sparks, though not in him, appeared the latest and highest development of historical study and writing in America. Not an investigator of the highest order, not a writer who could set forth historical statements with the best rhetorical skill, and not the author of any single work to be compared with the masterpieces of his greater contemporaries, Sparks shared and promoted, in good measure, the later studies from which so valuable results were attained. Born on a Connecticut farm in 1789, as a lad he was farmer, miller, carpenter, and at last rustic pedagogue. Working his way through school and college, by dint of hard work, and aided by kind friends, he soon was rewarded, notwithstanding the disadvantages of his early life, by that prompt appreciation which, for some reason, was often bestowed upon young Har-

vard men at the beginning of the century. At twenty-eight he was a tutor in the college; soon after he was an assistant in conducting *The North American Review;* at thirty he was a Unitarian minister in Baltimore; and at thirty-two, chaplain of the national House of Representatives. He shared, of course, in the production of the controversial books which were so multiplied in the days of the Unitarian discussions; and he edited a denominational periodical. Not often, in the intellectual history of the world, has so much theological writing been done by men afterwards famous in other departments of literary labor. Within a few years, Sparks returned to Boston, bought *The North American Review*, and began in 1828 the career in which he was to win his greatest success. His "Life of John Ledyard, the American Traveller," was published in that year,—a biography so interesting in theme as to attain a large sale, and so faithful in method and so commendable in style as to promise, notwithstanding the unimportant character of its subject, Sparks' future success. His first greater work, the "Life and Writings of George Washington," was already under way. In prosecuting this task, Sparks adopted methods hitherto unfamiliar, for the most part, in America. He searched faithfully the records in the possession of the States and the national government; he obtained access to many valuable papers still in the custody of the Washington family; and visiting Europe, in the course of his studies, he was enabled to copy valuable, and so far as American readers were concerned, unknown,

documents in the possession of the English and French governments. The work, when completed in 1837, consisted of twelve octavo volumes, well edited, well arranged, and well printed, covering by far the most important part of Washington's public and private papers, though, of course, not professing to be absolutely complete. The first of these twelve volumes consisted of a new life of Washington, based upon the editor's original researches. Readers at home felt that the small and poor literature of the young country was honored by the appearance of such a work; and foreign students, who were much more interested in American politics than in American poetry or piety, gave it a cordial welcome. Of less value and interest, but still important, was Sparks' collection of the "Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution," based on the records at Washington, and supplemented by materials gathered by the editor in the course of his European and other studies for the Washington work.

Thus far Sparks had collected what was, for all practical purposes, the whole body of Washington's writing; and had faithfully reprinted, in a form for permanent reference, many of the most important papers of the Revolutionary period, representing the labors of such men as Franklin, Jay, and Adams. It was clearly indicated that Sparks' service to American literature was chiefly to be that of a faithful editor and collector, particularly in the field of political biography. A "Life of Gouverneur Morris" (Minister to France, United States Senator, and prominent

Federalist politician in New York) filled another gap on the biographical shelf. Then followed Sparks' "Library of American Biography," a series which in fulness, accuracy, and literary style surpassed any previous attempt of the sort in America. Twenty-five volumes of this precursor of the "American Statesmen" series or the "American Men of Letters" series, were issued under Sparks' editorship between 1834 and 1848. More than one life was printed in each volume, and many writers were represented in the list of biographers. Sparks himself wrote eight of the sketches, and was aided by his friends in the Boston literary "set," or from other circles of competent men. The series, as a whole, performed a good work; it set before American readers clear and sufficiently full records of the leading men of the New World,—records elsewhere hardly accessible. Its principal defect was one due to the time in which it was published: a lack of the critical spirit. "How wonderful!" was the expression likely to spring from the lips of Americans, as they read of the doings of their predecessors; and Sparks and his associates too often wrote in a spirit of undue adulation.

In 1840 Sparks published "The Works of Benjamin Franklin; containing several Political and Historical Tracts not included in any former edition, and many Letters, Official and Private, not hitherto published; with notes and a Life of the Author." This edition of Franklin, in ten volumes, remained for nearly half a century the ablest in existence, though, of course, its reprint of the Autobiography

was much less perfect than that afterward edited by John Bigelow. The chief services of Sparks consisted, on the whole, of his preparation of the *opera omnia* of Washington and Franklin. The former was supplemented, in 1854, by "The Correspondence of the American Revolution," letters to Washington from 1775 to 1797, edited from holographs in Sparks' collection. Jared Sparks was not a historian in the higher sense, though it is customary to rank him with the better American writers. He was not an analyst like Bancroft; he lacked the rhetorical and descriptive power of Prescott; nor, of course, could he be analyst and painter in one, like Motley. He was by nature a collector and arranger of materials, rather than one who, like Gibbon, could draw from them a connected story. His lives of Washington and Franklin are but extended prefaces to his collections of their writings. He left no original work of the highest class, to which the student can point as Sparks' own achievement. Again, he lacked the power of sharply separating the good and the bad in a man's character, and of describing both in an impartial and instructive manner. He was unduly fond of eulogizing his subjects: the besetting sin of American writers "before the war," a sin not yet fully atoned and corrected. But without his useful labors later writers would have lacked a needed helper. Valuable material might have perished; and historical study, both in the author's library and at the reader's table, would have lost a great stimulus. Patience and industry, with an unfaltering determination to discover

and preserve all original documents of importance, were qualities which marked Sparks' mind and directed his life-work. These qualities, ever necessary to the historical student, had not been too common in America at the beginning of his career. He went to first sources, and taught others so to do.

It is fitting that the name of George Bancroft should stand at the head of the later and higher historians in his country. He resembled his predecessors who worked toward historical results in public life, as well as chronicled them with the pen. Bancroft did not share, of course, in the events which he described ; but his long career was identified with the public interests of the United States. Secretary of the Navy, Minister to England, and afterward Minister to Germany, he was familiar with the affairs of the government at home, and with diplomatic duties abroad. By his patience, his firmness of touch, his habits of industrial research among original documents, his unwillingness to leave events unexplained or springs of character misunderstood, and his forcible English style, Bancroft was well fitted for the task which became his life-work : the writing of a " History of the United States."

George Bancroft, b. 1800.

George Bancroft was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, in the last year of the eighteenth century. He was a promising lad at Phillips Exeter Academy, New Hampshire, and was a graduate of Harvard College at sixteen ; the requisitions for graduation at that day being about equivalent to those for entrance at the present time. In 1817 the fashion

for European travel and study was beginning to affect the United States, in particular Massachusetts, New York, and Virginia: and young Bancroft was one of the first to connect himself with a German university. Göttingen was then the favorite academic town among Americans, and there Bancroft studied, as well as at Berlin. The "grand tour" followed: celebrated professors and men of letters became familiar to him: and he shared in the enthusiastic study of German literature, which then began to influence our national thought. It is a matter of important record, which should not be forgotten by the student of American books, that the force of the newly revived Teutonic mind was directly felt in America simultaneously with its impact upon British thought. Germany and its philosophy and literature were not less known and not less highly esteemed in the United States than in England and Scotland, between 1815 and 1840. In Bancroft's mind this philosophy and literature had an effect less directly apparent than in the minds of some of his friends or contemporaries; but his breadth and strength of culture received material help from his university life abroad. Provincialism was already beginning to wane, in America; and it was of particular importance that the leading national historian should be emancipated from its influence, before he began his principal task.

In the year 1823 there was published at Cambridge, "from the University Press, Hilliard and Metcalf," a slim volume of "Poems" by George Bancroft. In looking at this beginning of Bancroft's

book-list, so unlike its successors from the same pen, one is reminded of the *belles-lettres* experiments of other American writers before they found their true place : of Everett's tracts and Greek grammar ; John Quincy Adams' rhetoric ; Judge Story's poems ; Motley's novels, " Merry Mount " and " Morton's Hope "; or the ventures in fiction of Hildreth and Parkman, etc. To discuss at length this respectable volume of verse would be to turn aside to a matter of mere bibliography, or to make an entertaining excursion to view one of the " curiosities of American literature." The real significance of the booklet is that it strikingly shows the incipient influence of European travel, and of the thought suggested by that travel, upon American poetry. The general method and the prevalent feeling are not unlike those of Coleridge and Southey in their descriptive pieces, though the execution is of course far below that of the first-named. All but one of the poems are European in theme ; six are grouped under the title " In Switzerland, September and October, 1821 " ; eleven are " In Italy, 1822 " ; and the last and longest, in heroic measure, is " Pictures of Rome." The young poet's aspirations, at least, are Coleridgean :

> Father in heaven ! while friendless and alone
> I gaze on nature's face in Alpine wild,
> I would approach thee nearer. Wilt thou own
> The solitary pilgrim for thy child.
>
> When on the hill's majestic height I trod,
> And thy creation smiling round me lay,
> The soul reclaimed its likeness unto God,
> And spurned its union with the baser clay.

His pictures are of Chamouni, the Valley above Inden, the Wengern-Alp, the Simplon, the Fountain of Trevi, Rome; and in presence of such scenes he writes verse a little more free in thought and form than that of the school of Pope, but less bold than that of the English poets of the time. A lesser Cowper seems to have set out upon a continental tour, pen in hand; and there is at least a marked difference between these poems by Bancroft and the Connecticut-nature poems of President Dwight, such as "Greenfield Hill," 1794; or the artificial "Power of Solitude," and the "Fugitive Poems," of Judge Story, printed ten years after Dwight's ambitious production. Versification, when it is a little less than poetry, may be called the note-book of the author's mind and mood: Bancroft's note-book showed that he was beginning to adapt himself to wider scenes and more catholic methods than most of his countrymen knew.

We need not stop to chronicle or to discuss the translations of German poems and the miscellaneous prose articles which Bancroft wrote before he was thirty years of age. They indicate that he felt and shared the spirit which was beginning to inform so many of his contemporaries: and that, like the early critics mentioned in the preceding chapter, he was willing to instruct as well as to discuss. Almost every young man of letters turns over in his mind many vague plans and possible schemes for authorship, before he begins his life-work, which may be widely different from that at first imagined. Bancroft, in early youth, had given few indications of the

fact that history was to be his chief field of labor; but in 1834 appeared the first volume, prepared with painstaking effort, of his "History of the United States." Exactly half a century was to elapse before the author issued, in 1884, the sixth and final volume of the last-revised edition of this his masterpiece, bringing United States history down to 1789, the beginning of the constitutional period. These fifty years were spent in deliberate, untiring investigation, in the most methodical writing, and occasionally in controversy connected with statements made in the work; but the "History," in its maturest form, shows few alterations, as compared with its first presentation. The plan had evidently been carefully prepared, and the method of elaboration duly arranged. Bancroft avoids the brilliant rhetorical effects of Macaulay, never allowing himself, in particular, to indulge in excessive antithesis, with its attendant dangers of undue blame and praise. He gravely adds sentence to sentence, without the word-painting one finds so attractive in Motley, Prescott, or Parkman, but certainly without dulness. The style is severe and condensed, but clear; it can hardly be called picturesque, but its effect is to leave definite and lasting ideas in the reader's mind. It resembles the best European masterpieces in gravity, thoroughness, and minutely conscientious workmanship; and yet it is a history which could hardly have been written by another than an American, even aside from the fact that so many of the authorities were to be found in American treasuries. Bancroft, in deep and per-

Bancroft's "History of the United States."

petual devotion to ecclesiastical and civil liberty, is a typical product of the New World, and a lineal successor of the early colonists and the immediate founders of the republic. He discerns and clearly points out the fact that the English colonists on the shores of America, in the seventeenth century, possessed a freedom unusual to those in similar circumstances. These colonists were Englishmen, of the same blood with those who secured the Magna Charta, who have been governed by parliament more truly than by king, and who, even in the old country, have never lost democratic proclivities. In America such Englishmen were freed from many of the constraints existing in the mother-country: they elected their governors and legislatures; they shaped their own ecclesiastical and civil relations; and only when they felt upon them the hand of power which, because unseen, they had half thought to be non-existent, did they rebel and form a new nation. To tell this story was Bancroft's task; and it will hardly need to be retold in full by other writers.

His opportunities for gathering and studying original documents, both in the United States and in Europe, were very great: and of them he made good use. No American writer, I suppose, has been more diligent in this matter, though others have been obliged to search out more obscure and unfamiliar papers. But Bancroft's idea of the proper use of "original documents" has not been that of some modern historians. He does not spread before his readers an undigested mass of letters, reports, or contemporary statements, of all grades of truth or

falsehood, value or worthlessness. Documents themselves make but a small showing in his pages. From them he sifts the facts, and offers the facts to the reader in a concise form. Foot-notes, even, are sparingly used. Authorities are kept in reserve for subsequent justification or for controversial purposes if need be. Bancroft trusts his own judgment rather than that of the reader, as far as decisions are concerned; well knowing that his familiarity with the whole theme, and with particular divisions, is the greater.

Again, acting on this method, he gives us a complete account of a long period, as viewed by one mind after profound study. Equal to the "specialists" in learning, he has the broad view of a Gibbon or a Motley.

Bancroft's "History of the United States" was well under way before the full development of the modern philosophical method of writing history. Stubbs and Taine were his successors, not his teachers. But the philosophical idea is prevalent, and apparent, throughout. The work aims to tell us what the colonies were at the start, how they were developed, and why they took the course adopted in 1775 and 1776. Buckle would have laid more emphasis, had he been writing such a history, upon external influences and the environment. Carlyle would have written more constantly of the force exerted by the colonists, and of their power in shaping their surroundings, defeating their adversaries from beyond seas, and working their will. But it cannot be claimed that Bancroft has ignored or

minimized the force-element in the inherited Saxon character, nor, on the other hand, that he has forgotten the potent shaping effect of long residence in a fertile country, remote from the old home, under conditions favoring governmental and individual freedom.

Many historians, including some not of the highest rank, have easily surpassed Bancroft in power of picturesque description of events. Even his account of the battle of Bunker Hill, though it is terse, clear, and orderly, is less graphic and telling than the reader might expect. Prescott, Motley, or Parkman would have wrought up the subject with more rhetorical skill. Indeed, Bancroft's matter is, as a rule, more praiseworthy than his literary manner. His most conspicuous successes are to be found in his analyses of the character of individuals or of bodies of men. Read a part of his estimate of Washington's character :

Bancroft's estimate of Washington.

His faculties were so well balanced and combined that his constitution, free from excess, was tempered evenly with all the elements of activity, and his mind resembled a well-ordered commonwealth; his passions, which had the intensest vigor, owned allegiance to reason; and, with all the fiery quickness of his spirit, his impetuous and massive will was held in check by consummate judgment. He had in his composition a calm, which gave him in moments of highest excitement the power of self-control, and enabled him to excel in patience, even when he had most cause for disgust. Washington was offered a command when there was little to bring out the unorganized resources of the continent but his own influence, and authority was connected with the people by the

most frail, most attenuated, scarcely discernible threads; yet, vehement as was his nature, impassioned as was his courage, he so restrained his ardor that he never failed continuously to exert that influence, and never exerted it so sharply as to break its force. . . . His understanding was lucid and his judgment accurate, so that his conduct never betrayed hurry or confusion. No detail was too minute for his personal inquiry and continued supervision; and at the same time he comprehended events in their widest aspects and relations. He never seemed above the object that engaged his attention, and was always equal, without an effort, to the solution of the highest questions affecting the destiny of mankind, even when there existed no precedents to guide his decision. In the perfection of the reflective powers he had no peer. In this way he never drew to himself admiration for the possession of any one quality in excess, never made in council any one suggestion that was sublime but impracticable, never in action took to himself the praise or the blame of undertakings astonishing in conception, but beyond his means of execution. It was the most wonderful accomplishment of this man that, placed upon the largest theatre of events, at the head of the greatest revolution in human affairs, he never failed to observe all that was possible, and at the same time to bound his endeavors by that which was possible . . . Profoundly impressed with confidence in God's providence, and exemplary in his respect for the forms of public worship, no philosopher of the eighteenth century was more firm in the support of freedom of religious opinion, none more remote from religious bigotry; but belief in God and trust in his overruling power formed the essence of his character. Divine wisdom not only illumines the spirit, it inspires the will. Washington was a man of action; his creed appears in his life; professions burst from him very rarely, and only at those great moments of crisis in the fortunes of his country when earth and heaven seemed actually to meet, and

his emotions became too intense for suppression; but his whole being was one continued act of faith in the eternal, intelligent, moral order of the universe. Integrity was so completely the law of his nature that a planet would sooner have shot from its sphere than he have departed from his uprightness, which was so constant that it often seemed to be almost impersonal. "His integrity was the most pure, his justice the most inflexible I have ever known," writes Jefferson, "no motives of interest or consanguinity, of friendship or hatred, being able to bias his decision." . . . They say of Giotto that he introduced goodness into the art of painting; Washington carried it with him to the camp and the cabinet, and established a new criterion of human greatness.*

This certainly is very high praise. As we think of some others of the world's great men, we ask: Could such an estimate be made of the character of Julius Cæsar, Charlemagne, Alfred the Great, William of Orange, Wellington, Napoleon? After reading it are we not inclined, in our haste, to ostracize this American Aristides, and to turn with some pleasure to less favorable estimates, in such works as the "History of the People of the United States," by Professor John Bach McMaster, which shall show us a more human and fallible Washington? McMaster, who takes up the national story where Bancroft leaves it—and the value of whose work, still incomplete, cannot now be estimated here—hardly agrees with Bancroft's comparison between Washington and a planet in its course, or with Jefferson's reverential laudation. McMaster would have us see the Washington of real life, and would have us be-

* Bancroft's "Hist. U. S.," author's last revision, iv., 207–209.

lieve him a hero whom one would rather praise dead than know living. In the following clear sentences we hardly seem to see the man of whom Bancroft spoke:

McMaster's estimate of Washington.

He died in his sixty-eighth year, and in the heyday of his glory and his fame. Time has since dealt gently with his memory, and he has come down to us as the greatest of all leaders and the most immaculate of all men. No other face is so familiar to us. His name is written all over the map of our country. We have made of his birthday a national feast. The outlines of his biography are known to every school-boy in the land. Yet his true biography is still to be prepared. General Washington is known to us, and President Washington. But George Washington is an unknown man. When at last he is set before us in his habit as he lived, we shall read less of the cherry-tree and more of the man. Naught surely that is heroic will be omitted, but side by side with what is heroic will appear much that is commonplace. We shall behold the great commander repairing defeat with marvellous celerity, healing the dissensions of his officers, and calming the passions of his mutinous troops. But we shall also hear his oaths, and see him in those terrible outbursts of passion to which Mr. Jefferson has alluded, and one of which Mr. Lear has described. We shall see him refusing to be paid for his services by Congress, yet exacting from the family of the poor mason the shilling that was his due. We shall know him as the cold and forbidding character with whom no fellow-man ever ventured to live on close and familiar terms. We shall respect and honor him for being, not the greatest of generals, not the wisest of statesmen, not the most saintly of his race, but a man with many human frailties and much common-sense, who rose in the fulness of time to be the political deliverer of our country.

The latest historians are apt to be severer than their predecessors. It is well, perhaps, to be reminded thus that the American people have apotheosized Washington and have beatified Lincoln. The "devil's advocate" is needed to examine the *acta sanctorum*, lest history be falsified; and we owe thanks to those who assume the ungracious task. But hero-worship is a better national element than indifferentism. When good and bad are balanced in our estimate of Washington, the good far predominates. In history his name will always stand with those of Alfred and Orange; it may challenge comparison with Charlemagne's, and in some obvious merits it surpasses those of Cæsar, Wellington, and Napoleon. Washington was a great man, but above all things the man for his time. It was far better that he should lead the Revolutionary war than for any other soldier to do so. It is not pleasant to think of the results which would have followed had Hamilton been the first Federalist President of the republic. All this Mr. Bancroft has made plain, so long as his masterly history shall be read.

His account and analysis of the character of the Puritans is neither less strong nor less favorable than this estimate of Washington. Bancroft, like so many authors of New England birth, had grown away from the theological position and the social rigor of the Puritans, but was a legitimate successor of theirs, in the matter of insistance upon individual freedom in religion and politics. The progress of history within the past three hundred years has certainly shown, as he would have us believe, that

Puritanism was more beneficial to America than that spirit of chivalry which he contrasts with it. Had Puritanism petrified, and never been developed into something broader and serener, it would have crushed out the life of American poetry and art, almost of American humanity; but as a foundation, a starting-point, nothing better could have been found.

Richard Hildreth's "History of the United States" naturally claims mention here. Formerly it was deemed a rival, or at least a fellow, of Bancroft's; but Hildreth's work has proved less valuable as the years have passed by, and now is regarded as of a lower order of merit. Hildreth's sympathies were less democratic than Bancroft's, and his eulogies of the Federalists, in the nation-making days, are correspondingly fervid. Hildreth began to print his history in 1849, and finished it in 1853, bringing the record down to 1821. Bancroft's, begun fifteen years before, and finished a generation after Hildreth's, comes down to a date no later than 1789. The chief value of Hildreth's work has depended upon the fact that, for many years prior to the beginning of the histories by Schouler and McMaster (still in progress, and describing the United States under the Constitution), there was no other elaborate account of the period including the administrations of Presidents Washington, John Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe,—the formative period of the nation. Hildreth's estimates of character are of service, but are usually severe. His denunciations of men great, if faulty (in particular of

Richard Hildreth, 1807–1865.

Jefferson), make more notable his inclusion of Hamilton among "the serene and benign sons of the celestial gods." We can endure this sort of writing in Washington's case, but in Hamilton's it becomes insufferable. Hildreth's attitude toward Puritanism and the New England element is substantially that of Bancroft; but toward the South there is greater hostility, for Hildreth was by intense convictions a Federalist, Whig, Abolitionist.

Hildreth's "History of the United States" cannot be called a hasty or superficial production. His material was ample, he had studied it and arranged it with care, and though, at the last, he wrote rapidly, he had been preparing to write all his life, and merely transcribed the records stored in a full mind. If he was politician as well as historian, the same might be said of his rival Bancroft, whose democracy was as intense, though not as aggressive, as Hildreth's whiggism. Hildreth's miscellaneous writing was of slight or temporary value: "Archy Moore," an anti-slavery novel; a campaign life of Harrison, written for the "log-cabin and hard-cider" campaign of 1840; "A Theory of Morals and a Theory of Politics"; books or newspaper articles in favor of free banking or against the annexation of Texas. All this printed matter, though now unvalued and unread, was in a small sense a work of preparation for the larger labor of the author's lifetime. The history is clear, though it cannot be called readable: the art of picturesque writing was not known to Hildreth: and even his characterizations, contrasts, and denunciations do not quicken

Hildreth's "History of the United States."

the reader's pulse. His statements of facts are trustworthy; they cover a period still undescribed in any other work of the same size; and they are marked by the courage of conviction and an intrepid desire to state the truth. It would be idle to claim that his pages are untinged by political prejudice; but certainly the author did not consciously yield to that prejudice.

Hildreth's history has long been deemed an authority; but I do not see how it can fail to fall into increasing neglect year by year. In its treatment of the early constitutional period of the United States, for which it used to be esteemed, it is in almost every way inferior to T. W. Higginson's "Larger History of the United States, to the Close of Jackson's Presidency." Higginson equals Hildreth in originality and industry, and surpasses him in vigor, picturesqueness, and readableness. Higginson's long career as an essayist and newspaper writer had given him finished literary style, in which he has well set forth the results of his later historical studies. One speaks with diffidence concerning so recent a work; but of all Higginson's long list of books this history seems most likely to endure.

Thomas Wentworth Higginson, b. 1823.

All the historians whose names have thus far been considered in this chapter wrote of the development of the country of their birth, and chiefly, of course, of the development of its eastern part. Hutchinson traced the history of Massachusetts, Belknap of New Hampshire, Ramsay of South Carolina and of the Revolution, Miss Adams of New England,

Holmes of America as a whole. In the succeeding generation, Sparks wrote that part of the American history which is included in the biography of noteworthy men. Hannah Adams, to compare lesser writers with greater, may be called the forerunner of John Gorham Palfrey, and in a broader field Holmes was the precursor, and one not unworthy, of Hildreth and Bancroft. These are the names of the more noted American historians whose field has lain within the borders of the United States. After describing the work of Palfrey, we shall turn to other writers who have found themes in the new states of the Pacific coast; in French and English America outside the United States; or in Mexico, South America, and the continent of Europe.

Nearly all the leading American historians grew up in the days of the Unitarian revival in New England, and several of them shared in the attendant controversies. Belknap and Holmes had been Congregational ministers before the division of the Congregational churches of Massachusetts into Trinitarian and Unitarian; Bancroft, Hildreth, and Parkman were the sons of Congregational ministers, who joined the Unitarian ranks; while Sparks and Palfrey were Unitarian ministers, actively engaged in the work of their profession, before they attained celebrity as historians. Hildreth, Sparks, and Palfrey, indeed, took a somewhat active part in the doctrinal discussions of the period of their youth and early manhood; and the last-named, besides his experience as pastor in Boston, served as professor of biblical literature in the divinity school at Harvard.

John Gorham Palfrey, 1796–1881.

A German, French, or English secular historian, who had published a volume of sermons on the duties of private life, two octavo volumes on the evidences of Christianity, four volumes of lectures on the Jewish scriptures, and another on quotations from the Old Testament, would be deemed almost a curiosity; yet such was Palfrey's preliminary work. In quantity it was perhaps not noticeable, even in New England; but the union between theological pursuits and literary, in that section of America, was no new thing, nor had it ceased in the first part of the nineteenth century. We cannot, in all probability, look for its continuance; we need consider now only its relation to the literary quality of the histories under consideration. It affected that quality indirectly, in that the clergy, from 1800 to 1840, were still the best-educated class, and the one from which writers were most likely to come. We do not forget that the fathers of Emerson, Lowell, and Holmes were ministers. The principal direct influence of New England Unitarianism upon Bancroft, Hildreth, Sparks, or Palfrey is to be looked for in their devotion to the element of intellectual freedom in the colonies, from 1620 onward. The theological dogmas of the Puritans they handle with more or less criticism or hostility; but for the theory of the Puritans, in so far as it formed or modified the subsequent spiritual, mental, or political work of the colonies and nation, they show respect, and sometimes hearty admiration. They wrote American history with sympathy, from within; yet their altered theological beliefs transported them, as it were, to

an outside point of view, and helped to make them impartial on-lookers. Some of them, and the remark is certainly true as applied to Palfrey, saw with keen eyes, and exposed pitilessly to the light of later days, the cold, hard, and baneful side of Puritanism : its repression of sentiment and of humanity, its denial to others of the freedom it arrogated to itself, and its share in the bloody persecutions that disgraced so many Christian churches, Protestant far less than Catholic, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Yet Palfrey, even in his account of witchcraft, if as severe as truth is also as broad as the spirit of history. "The people of Massachusetts," he writes, "in the seventeenth century, *like all other Christian people at that time and later*,—at least, with extremely rare exceptions,—believed in the reality of a hideous crime called witchcraft. They thought they had Scripture for that belief, and they knew they had law for it, explicit and abundant ; and with them law and Scripture were absolute authorities for the regulation of opinion and conduct." I do not see how more could be put into two sentences on this awful subject. Here is a statement of the general opinion of the world, shared by so lovely a soul and so thorough a broad-churchman as Sir Thomas Browne ; and here, too, is a clear presentation of the theocratic polity of the Puritans, as applied to church and state. Thus Dr. Palfrey goes on with his sad story, and in this spirit he writes his whole history.

Palfrey's "History of New England."

His style resembles that of Hildreth or Bancroft, principally that of Hildreth, rather than that of Pres-

cott or Motley. But Hildreth is painfully dry; his history is virtually annals rather than history, and certainly it is no more readable than the modest annals of Dr. Abiel Holmes. Palfrey, plain, matter-of-fact, and straightforward, interests us from the start. The "History of New England," as he prepared it, could be made the basis of a compendious work for popular reading, and also could win the applause of Mr. Lowell and other critics of high standing. Palfrey, indeed, though read by a general public, seems to me an authors' author in some such sense, *mutatis mutandis*, as Landor was a poets' poet. He wrote of a subject familiar to at least twenty scholars of high standing, living in his own community, and within reach of the authorities upon which he relied; yet the trustworthiness of his work was not impeached in important particulars. Scholarly, accurate, and terse, he made his history, in itself, almost an original authority. His field was narrower than Bancroft's, but broader and more diversified than those covered by single works of Prescott or Motley; this fact, perhaps, accounts for the comparative obscurity of his name, as set beside those of other American historians of the first rank. One thinks of Palfrey, after all, as he would think of a nineteenth-century Thomas Prince or William Stith. But that he is an historian of an honorable rank in his country's literature, can hardly be doubted. In ability of several kinds he surpasses Hildreth, and it does not seem rash to suppose that the passage of years will emphasize the fact. Like Hildreth, he left behind plenty of obscure books, of no lasting value; but the greater

achievement, though it cannot redeem the lesser from their fate, will at least be prominent in itself. The public of critics, furthermore, it should be said, is inclined to resent any condensation of a history, when performed by the author's own hand, and, on this account, possibly, some of them would associate Palfrey with the useful makers of school-book histories; but his purpose in preparing his compendiums was an honorable and justifiable one. Said Dr. Palfrey, in the preface to the third of his four volumes: "Mere literary reputation, if it were accessible to me, would not now be highly attractive. My ambition has rather been to contribute something to the welfare of my country, by reviving the image of the ancient virtue of New England, and I am likely to persist in the hope, that in that honest undertaking I shall not appear to have altogether failed." The question whether he failed may, perhaps, be answered in the words of the first American critic, James Russell Lowell:

"It is to the praise of his work that its merit lies more in its tone of thought and its weight of opinion than in pictorial effects. Brilliancy is cheap; but trustworthiness of thought and evenness of judgment are not to be had at every booth. Dr. Palfrey combines in the temper of his mind and the variety of his experience some quite peculiar qualifications for the task he has undertaken. A man of singular honesty of purpose and conscientiousness of action, a thoroughly trained theologian, he ripened and enlarged the somewhat partial knowledge of mankind and their motives which falls to the lot of a clergyman, by the experience of active politics and the training of practical statesmanship. . . . It is little to say that his work is

the only one of its kind. He has done it so well that it is likely to remain so. With none of that glitter of style and epigrammatic point of expression, which please more than they enlighten, and tickle when they should instruct, there is a gravity and precision of thought, a sober dignity of expression, an equanimity of judgment, and a clear apprehension of characters and events, which give us the very truth of things as they are, and not as either he or his reader might wish them to be."*

I do not often give myself, or care to give myself, the pleasure of quoting the opinion of other critics concerning the merit or demerit of the works under discussion in these pages. But it would be a pleasure to cite Lowell more often than I find possible, not because of the external or merely literary merits of his style, nor because his judgments are so just, but because no American writer has so clearly apprehended and stated the *American* qualities of our literature. With a mind developed in the sources of the best European culture, Lowell perceives such truths as these :

"We do not mean that Dr. Palfrey, like a great many declaimers about the Pilgrim fathers, looks upon them all as men of grand conceptions and superhuman foresight. An entire ship's company of Columbuses is what the world never saw. Nor has he formed any theory, and fitted his facts to it, as a man in a hurry is apt to cram his travelling-bag, with a total disregard of shape or texture. But he has found that the facts will only fit comfortably together on a single plan, namely, that the fathers did have a conception (which those will call grand who regard simplicity as a necessary element of grandeur) of founding here a commonwealth on those two eternal bases of Faith

* *North American Review*, c., 173.

and Work; that they had, indeed, no revolutionary ideas of universal liberty, but yet, what answered the purpose quite as well, an abiding faith in the brotherhood of men as children of God; and that they did not so much propose to make all things new as to develop the latent possibilities of English law and English character, by clearing away the fences by which the abuse of the one was gradually discommoning the other from the broad fields of natural right. They were not in advance of their age, as it is called, for no one who is so can ever work profitably in it; but they were alive to the highest and most earnest thinking of their time. Dr. Palfrey also makes it clear that the thought of separation from the parent state was not only not unfamiliar to the minds of the leaders of New England emigration, but that they looked forward to it and prepared for it as something that might be expedient or necessary according to the turn of events. Apart from contemporary evidence of their hopes and intentions, he finds in the inevitable results of the institutions they founded the proof of what they meant to do." *

I cannot but think that their high and ever-present conception of the American idea of the State has been a chief cause of the success of the two principal historians, Bancroft and Palfrey,—of the development of American institutions. The same notion of liberty is never lost to sight in the histories of Motley, having a foreign but kindred theme. It is also considered by Parkman, in some parts of his account of the struggle between France and England in North America. Prescott had less need to think of it, and yet he was an American writer, removed alike from the temptations incident to an aristocratic and unsympathetic society, and from those which, by a re-

* *North American Review*, c., 175.

action, are born of socialistic democracy, and sometimes tinge the pages of history.

This Americanism is not the silly and unscholarly national pride which used to swell in Fourth of July orations, and which is observable in some minor histories of American authorship. Our better writers, and some of the lesser, have been commendably impartial. Some more modest works—histories of States, sections, or even cities—might be chronicled here as creditable to the spirit and skill of their authors; but, in such a record as this, the multiplication of names and titles confuses the reader's sense of perspective. I can hardly forbear, however, to mention the vast "History of the Pacific Coast of North America" (for so I may entitle the entire undertaking), which, in nearly forty large volumes, is gradually coming from the pen of Hubert Howe Bancroft and his fellow-workers. Seldom has a writer undertaken so vast a work; Mr. Bancroft frankly admits that the scheme is too broad for his single hand, and that he employs the aid of those whose researches he but systematizes and puts into final form. His history stands midway between great collections of monographs by various writers (like Mr. Justin Winsor's "Narrative and Critical History of America"), and such unities as the works of Gibbon or George Bancroft. It may be questioned whether the view given by the single mind, within moderate com[illegible] is not much superior to that displayed by the method of either a Winsor or a Hubert Bancroft. It has been wittily said that the scheme of the latter is based upon the idea that

Hubert Howe Bancroft, b. 1832.

it is necessary to have, before history can be written, photographs of every object ever used by man. Certainly, in proportion to the average length of a reader's lifetime, a thirty-nine volume history of a comparatively unimportant part of the world is fitted for Brobdingnagians rather than for Americans.

But when one has said this, and has noted the fact that, in some of Mr. Bancroft's volumes there is a manifest lack of unity of style, praise is to be bestowed upon his undertaking. It is, of course, exhaustive; so vast a preliminary collection of manuscript or printed materials was never before accumulated by an American historical writer; the work of collection and condensation has been intelligently done—for there is condensation even in thirty-nine octavos; a spirit of historic impartiality is apparent; much that is interesting, as well to the anthropologist as to the historical student, has been preserved and conveniently arranged for reference; and surely it is not often that so large and useful a mass of material is reserved for that fortunate indidividual, "the historian of the future." I can fairly describe the merits and the limitations of Mr. Bancroft's great scheme, even before its completion, by saying that he is intelligently editing an encyclopædia of the history of that part of America to which he has devoted his life-work.

Francis Parkman, b. 1823.

In taking up the books of Francis Parkman, we pass, for the most part, beyond the limits of the territory of the United States, though not beyond those of North America. Parkman's general theme is France and England in North

America—one closely connected with the colonists' springs of action, as well as with the great European struggles of the eighteenth century, and of historical illumination for the minds of present readers.

The early training and the intellectual experience of Francis Parkman were in many respects similar to those of other American historians of corresponding rank. The son of a Unitarian minister, he was born in Boston, graduated at Harvard, and experimented in the art of fiction-writing. But his "Vassall Morton" has been assigned to the shelf whereon rest Motley's "Merry Mount" and Hildreth's "Archy Moore." More popular and more justly successful had been the volume entitled "The Oregon Trail: Sketches of Prairie and Rocky-Mountain Life." These sketches had been originally printed in the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, of New York, and were collected in a volume in 1847. The "Indian as he used to be" was vividly portrayed in these romantic sketches of real life, which formed a prelude to and preparation for some of the author's maturer studies. Just a quarter of a century after the appearance of this book, more graphic and picturesque than Irving's "Astoria," the author wrote of it, half in humor, half in sadness: "The wild cavalcade that defiled with me down the gorges of the Black Hills, with its paint and war-plumes, fluttering trophies and savage embroidery, bows, arrows, lances, and shields, will never be seen again. Those who formed it have found bloody graves, or a ghastlier burial in the maws of wolves. The Indian of to-day, armed with a revolver and crowned with an old hat, cased,

"The Oregon Trail."

possibly, in trousers, or muffled in a tawdry shirt, is an Indian still, but an Indian shorn of the picturesqueness which was his most conspicuous merit. The mountain trapper is no more, and the grim romance of his wild, hard life is a memory of the past." This memory of the past is that which is spread out for us upon Mr. Parkman's pages, which form a sort of supplement to Cooper's better novels. The passage just cited may fairly be taken as a sample of the author's brilliant and interesting style. His treatment of the Indians and their deeds hits the happy mean between sensationalism and tameness. Parkman has poetic sympathy and a high sense of color, both of which are needed in such a book as this, and not less in his records, in later works, of the struggles of early soldiers and missionaries in a crude and unsettled land. Braves and buffaloes, camps and hunts, aboriginal war and barbarian peace, virgin prairies and sky-piercing mountains, tangled forests and turbid streams, wild beasts and half-savage men struggling for the mastery—these things, which some foreign critics deem the only characteristic things in America, find a true and just chronicler in Francis Parkman. If the literature of travel could be given a lasting place in the world's choice of books, as in my opinion it cannot, these vivid chapters would not fail to make good their claim.

Akin to "The Oregon Trail" in its Indian theme and its descriptions of the far West, but rising to the dignity of history, is that work first published in 1851, and afterward greatly enlarged: "The Conspiracy of Pontiac, and the Indian

Pontiac and the Indian War.

War after the Conquest of Canada." Chronologically it follows the series hereafter to be mentioned, entitled France and England in North America; but in theme and treatment it may be read as an independent work, brought after its publication into general relation with kindred volumes. The title does not indicate, to the reader unfamiliar with the history of the American Indians, the importance of the work. The aboriginal tribes, or at least some of their more astute leaders, said that their hopes rested with the French rather than the English, and therefore sided with the former in the struggle for Canada, the prelude to the American revolution. This fact lay at the background of the events described by Mr. Parkman in these volumes. An historical situation of more than local or temporary importance, and a central figure upon which there rests the idea of romance and chivalric courage—these two things the historian likes to secure in the theme of which he writes; and both of them Parkman found. His ground, furthermore, was almost entirely unfamiliar, and his hero was of that sad race, compounded of good and evil in almost equal proportion, which preceded the English on American soil, and which never fails to arouse the interest of the reader of poetry, romance, or history. A comparison between Parkman and Cooper inevitably occurs to the reader of "The Conspiracy of Pontiac"; and the impression left upon the mind is that while Cooper used the novelist's privilege of selecting and retouching, he was substantially accurate in his pictures of Indian character. The

facts stated by Parkman do not invalidate the fancies of Cooper. The true character of the aboriginal inhabitants, before they were corrupted and degraded by contact with the worse elements of "civilization," has been preserved for all time in the pages of Cooper, Parkman, and Longfellow; but Parkman, as the historian was bound to do, has introduced few colors of mere romance or idealism. The imaginative element, so essential to the historian, is, however, by no means lacking. Picturesqueness is the most conspicuous quality in Parkman's pages; and picturesqueness implies the ability to construct vivid pictures in the mind, and to transfer them to language without great loss of completeness or power.

Before passing to the series of histories under one title, the preparation of which has occupied the greater part of Parkman's literary life, and upon which his future reputation will chiefly rest, I pause to discuss, for a moment, a striking illustration, as afforded by the higher contemporary criticism of his books, of the difficulties of estimating the rank of a living writer. Such a discussion would be superfluous in a history of literature older than that of America; but it will display more clearly, perhaps, than any thing previously mentioned here, the necessity, and yet the seeming impossibility in many cases, of keeping an intense admiration in check until it be certain that time has justified its untrammelled expression. Without specifying the individual works which have elicited the commendation cited, one discovers, in the criticism devoted

to Parkman's writings, such expressions as follow: "One of the most brilliant and fascinating books that has ever been written by any historian since the days of Herodotus." "His place is alongside of the greatest historians whose works are English classics." "Mr. Parkman, who, if Mr. Bancroft will forgive us for saying so, is the most eminent American historian now alive." "We know of no writer whose pages are so real and vivid in qualities harmonizing with his theme, as are his." "The events of the final struggle of France and England for the control of North America could not have found an historian more fitted for his task"; etc. I omit, of course, many equally glowing panegyrics from humbler critical sources, merely saying that those chosen as samples are from authorities supposed to be of the gravest and most cautious temper.* It is no wonder that more impressionable reviewers find his books "as fascinating as the best of Scott's novels," having a style "perfect for their purpose," "intensely interesting," and, indeed, "of incalculable value." How could it well be otherwise, since "magic hides itself in the brain and pen of Mr. Parkman," while "no poet, not even Homer himself, ever had a more romantic theme."† All this is concerning a writer whom the author of the only complete history (1886) of American literature—John Nichol—does not admit to his pages.

Through such flowery paths must the less hasty

* The citations are taken, in order, from Mr. John Fiske, *The Athenæum*, *Blackwood's Magazine*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *The Saturday Review*.

† The last quotation is from the New York *Evening Post*.

critic of contemporary literature endeavor to make his way, with a hundred voices chanting choruses of laudation in his ears. What historian of this century really deserves such praise as this? How many historians of any century, from Thucydides to Gibbon, deserve all the commendations here bestowed upon a single living writer? None knows better than Mr. Parkman himself that the critical pitch is tuned too high, and none would welcome more cordially any well-meant endeavor, however unsuccessful, to get a little nearer the truth. What are the real and lasting merits of Mr. Parkman's large achievement, in plan and in execution?

"France and England in North America."

In the first place, the general subject chosen for the series, entitled "France and England in North America," was an excellent one. Touched by many writers, it had never been thoroughly and systematically treated by any. Mr. Parkman did not undertake to write a history of the United States, or Canada, or North America as a whole; but rather of the struggle of two great peoples, each with its special beliefs and customs, for the possession of the New World or of some of its most important parts. This subject lent itself admirably both to the picturesque treatment of what we may call the superficial historian and the analytical processes of the investigator into the philosophy of history. Or, in the author's own words, his aim was, "while scrupulously and rigorously adhering to the truth of facts, to animate them with the life of the past, and, so far as might be, clothe the skeleton with flesh. . . . Faithfulness to the truth of history

involves far more than a research, however patient and scrupulous, into special facts. Such facts may be detailed with the most minute exactness, and yet the narrative, taken as a whole, may be unmeaning or untrue. The narrator must seek to imbue himself with the life and spirit of the time. He must study events in their bearings near and remote, in the character, habits, and manners of those who took part in them. He must himself be, as it were, a sharer or a spectator of the action he describes." Mr. Parkman, in other words, does not content himself with that dry specialism which, however valuable to the collector of materials for historical writing, does not adequately equip the historian. There can be no question that Mr. Parkman is both "patient and scrupulous" as a gatherer of documents, and a faithful and trustworthy sifter of truth from falsehood. But, in addition to this, he has been successful in the plan which he undertook, that of imbuing himself with the life and spirit of the time described. Given a fresh and attractive theme, a unity in itself, and yet subdivided into well-defined periods or episodes; and given, on the historian's part, industry and accuracy in the collation and study of authorities, together with a sympathetic spirit on the one hand and historic impartiality on the other, it is not difficult to see how critics have come to indulge in extravagant expressions of praise. When all needed deductions have been made from their too generous commendation, enough remains to entitle Mr. Parkman to a high place among the writers of his time.

His most conspicuous quality, and that by which,

I suppose, he will longest be kept in remembrance, is, as has been said, his picturesqueness. His points of view are well chosen, and from the selected standpoints he makes us see, with the eyes of a bystander at the time of action, the larger and the smaller deeds that are done. Word-painting for a purpose is not often better offered; hence, of course, it follows that Parkman is the most interesting of American historians, with the possible exception of Prescott, who is suffering at the present time from a comparative neglect that is not easily accounted for. This sort of graphic writing is found in the pages of Motley, plus an analytical power which neither Prescott nor Parkman possesses. But Motley can hardly be called a picturesque historian; at least, other adjectives more naturally and quickly occur to his readers, when they think of his literary method and achievement. For Prescott and Parkman, in their external style, and for Motley, in both style and strength, this may be said: that they fulfil excellently the proper demand that historical writing need not be dull—has no right to be dull. In giving to Motley credit for a strength greater than that of Prescott or Parkman, I would not imply that the latter are superficial; I mean that Motley leaves upon the mind of the reader the thought that an historian of such power in political analyzing might have shared and shaped the doings he describes.

The six parts of "France and England in North America," which had been published prior to 1886, were: "The Pioneers of France in the New World," "The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth

Century," "La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West," "The Old Régime in Canada," "Count Frontenac and New France under Louis XIV.," and "Montcalm and Wolfe." The author aptly calls his undertaking "a series of historical narratives"; and the very titles show the union of a common purpose with individual characteristics. Of the whole series, the first volume is necessarily the most discursive; while at the other extreme stand "The Jesuits in North America," "The Old Régime in Canada," and "Montcalm and Wolfe," all of which are historical monographs of unusual completeness. The volume on the Jesuits, or the two volumes devoted to Montcalm and Wolfe, probably afford the most favorable means of familiarizing one's self with Parkman's manner. The names of Montcalm and Wolfe, says Mr. Parkman, "stand as representative of the two nations whose final contest for the control of North America is the subject of the book," which thus fitly concludes, for the present (one period yet remains to be covered), the general undertaking.

Parkman, it should be said, before we drop his name, is by no means destitute of power of broad historical statement, in which he is able to use a literary style not unlike that employed in his picturesque descriptions of battles or persons. No better citation could be made in illustration of this fact than the strong and forcible closing paragraphs of the second and final volume of "Montcalm and Wolfe":

> All, and more than all, that France had lost, England had won. Now, for the first time, she was beyond dispute the

greatest of maritime and colonial Powers. · Portugal and Holland, her precursors in ocean enterprise, had long ago fallen hopelessly behind. Two great rivals remained, and she had humbled the one and swept the other from her path. Spain, with vast American possessions, was sinking into the decay which is one of the phenomena of modern history; while France, of late a most formidable competitor, had abandoned the contest in despair. England was mistress of the seas, and the world was thrown open to her merchants, explorers, and colonists. A few years after the Peace, the navigator Cook began his memorable series of voyages, and surveyed the strange and barbarous lands which after times were to transform into other Englands, vigorous children of this mother of nations. It is true that a heavy blow was soon to fall upon her; her own folly was to alienate the eldest and greatest of her offspring. But nothing could rob her of the glory of giving birth to the United States; and, though politically severed, this gigantic progeny were to be not the less a source of growth and prosperity to the parent that bore them—joined with her in a triple kinship of laws, language, and blood. The war, or series of wars, that ended with the Peace of Paris, secured the opportunities and set in action the forces that have planted English homes in every clime, and dotted the earth with English garrisons and posts of trade.

Parkman on the struggle between England and France.

With the Peace of Paris ended the checkered story of New France; a story which would have been a history if faults of constitution and the bigotry and folly of rulers had not dwarfed it to an episode. Yet it is a noteworthy one in both its lights and its shadows: in the disinterested zeal of the founder of Quebec, the self-devotion of the early missionary martyrs, and the daring enterprise of explorers; in the spiritual and temporal vassalage from which the only escape was to the savagery of the wilderness; and in the swarming corruptions which were the natural result of an attempt to rule, by the absolute hand

of a master beyond the Atlantic, a people bereft of every vestige of civil liberty. Civil liberty was given them by the British sword; but the conqueror left their religious system untouched, and through it they have imposed upon themselves a weight of ecclesiastical tutelage that finds few e juals in the most Catholic countries of Europe. Such guardianship is not without certain advantages. When faithfully exercised it aids to uphold some of the tamer virtues, if that can be called a virtue which needs the constant presence of a sentinel to keep it from escaping; but it is fatal to mental robustness and moral courage; and if French Canada would fulfil its aspirations, it must cease to be one of the most priest-ridden communities of the modern world.

Scarcely were they free from the incubus of France when the British provinces showed symptoms of revolt. The measures on the part of the mother-country which roused their resentment, far from being oppressive, were less burdensome than the navigation laws to which they had long submitted; and they resisted taxation by Parliament simply because it was in principle opposed to their rights as freemen. They did not, like the American provinces of Spain at a later day, sunder themselves from a parent fallen into decrepitude; but with astonishing audacity they affronted the wrath of England in the hour of her triumph, forgot their jealousies and quarrels, joined hands in the common cause, fought, endured, and won. The disunited colonies became the United States. The string of discordant communities along the Atlantic coast has grown to a mighty people, joined in a union which the earthquake of civil war served only to compact and consolidate. Those who in the weakness of their dissensions needed help from England against the savage on their borders, have become a nation that may defy every foe but that most dangerous of all foes, herself; destined to a majestic future if she will shun the excess and perversion of the principles that made her great,

prate less about the enemies of the present, resist the mob and the demagogue as she resisted parliament and king, rally her powers from the race for gold and the delirium of prosperity to make firm the foundations on which that prosperity rests, and turn some fair proportion of her vast mental forces to other objects than material progress and the game of party politics. She has turned the savage continent, peopled the solitude, gathered wealth untold, waxed potent, imposing, redoubtable; and now it remains for her to prove, if she can, that the rule of the masses is consistent with the highest growth of the individual; that democracy can give the world a civilization as mature and pregnant, ideas as energetic and vitalizing, and types of manhood as lofty and strong, as any of the systems which it boasts to supplant.

It is difficult for an American historian to avoid an American treatment of his theme. It was of course impossible for Mr. Parkman, at the conclusion of a history so closely connected with the birth of the new nation, to omit some philosophic reflections upon the origin and career of his own country.

In discussing the writings of William Hickling Prescott we turn aside from the soil of the United States, though not from that of North America and South America. Prescott was the author of histories of "The Conquest of Mexico" and "The Conquest of Peru," as well as of "The Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella," under whose auspices Columbus discovered the new world. These works, with his "History of Philip the Second" and his "Biographical and Critical Miscellanies," gave him a reputation brilliant and apparently solid in his lifetime, though it has un-

William Hickling Prescott, 1796–1859.

questionably been obscured, in the quarter of a century since his death, by the weightier work of Bancroft and Motley, and by the writings of Parkman, which fairly rival those of Prescott in the matter of vivid and romantic delineation. "Brilliant" histories inevitably have to suffer in consequence of the speedy popularity they win: sometimes a harsh criticism of them appears during the lifetime of their authors; more often it slowly follows them after their authors' death. If Prescott were merely sensational and superficial, as most assuredly he is not, there would be no likelihood that his easily-won reputation would be maintained in any degree. But he chose for his themes historical periods and characters not discussed by previous writers at similar length; he equipped himself for his task by years of patient study; he gathered from European sources documents and data not before brought to light; and the results of his investigations he set before his readers in an attractive form. Without claiming that Prescott is an historian strictly of the highest class, we cannot avoid considering him in the company of Bancroft, Motley, and Parkman, his literary kinship being chiefly with the last. There is no special necessity why his subjects should be taken up for fresh treatment by other hands, for they have been faithfully and accurately portrayed by him. If this is the case, there would seem to be no reason why his colors, though gorgeous and sometimes laid on the canvas with an eye eager for effect, should jeopardize the favor accorded him by the reader.

Prescott's partial blindness.

The circumstances under which Prescott wrote were such as to promote great care in the matter of thought and expression. Because of a sad accident occurring in his college days, he was nearly blind for the rest of his working life, and was obliged to avail himself not only of the services of readers and private secretaries, but also of a "noctograph," or blind man's writing-machine. His industry, and his power of assimilation and classification of facts, went far to remove or minimize the difficulties under which he toiled. Prescott's mind was of a poetic and imaginative cast, and though he was not blind, he had much of the blind man's power to see single objects and broad fields of action by the inner light. The two American historians, Prescott and Parkman, who have been most widely known for their graphic and picturesque powers of description, have been the ones most trammelled in the use of physical sight. Both, fortunately, possessed the leisure and the means which made it possible for them to work patiently on, and their writings are trophies of victory won little by little.

Englishmen used to wonder at the early age at which Americans sought or achieved fame; but Prescott's studies and preparation were such as might have satisfied a Milton. He was forty years of age when he published his first work, his "History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic." Ten solid years had been devoted to its composition, besides those spent in preliminary or kindred studies. Bancroft's first volume had appeared three years be-

fore; Motley and Parkman were as yet unknown, and only Irving was a rival. The youthfulness of the literature of America is made clearly apparent when we reflect that only half a century has elapsed since the appearance of a complete historical treatise of a high class, written by an American, and accepted as a standard by European authorities. Prescott had chosen an attractive theme: Spain in her splendor at the time of the discovery of the New World. It was his policy to hunt for historical subjects, rather than to take those which forced themselves upon his attention. What shall be my occupation in life? That of a man of letters. What sort of man of letters? An historian. An historian of what? Of the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. This would not seem to be the best method of procedure; but Prescott's leisure, possible and enforced, was greater than that which falls to the lot of most literary men. While he was not haunted, as most historians or poets or novelists have been, by an overmastering and ever-present idea, it cannot be denied that he deliberately chose the profession for which he was best fitted, and achieved in that profession the highest success which his powers made possible. He even overcame his physical disability, and it is unlikely that any more favorable circumstances would have worked results more considerable in quantity or more praiseworthy in quality.

Prescott's Histories.

The order of production of Prescott's works was as follows: "History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic," 1837; "History of the Conquest of Mexico," 1843; "History of the

Conquest of Peru," 1847; "History of the Reign of Philip the Second," 1855–8. The last-named was left incomplete; to it is to be added an edition of Robertson's "Charles the Fifth," and a volume of miscellanies duly selected, in the Boston fashion of the day, from *The North American Review.* These works cannot be called "the romance of history," or "romantic history," if those terms leave upon the mind any sense of inaccuracy or haste, or any overweening desire to make a sensation or to color a picture. Prescott, with all his fervor and brilliancy, is, strictly speaking, less rhetorical in his methods than Macaulay. Mexico and Peru, with their gorgeous splendor and the decayed and forgotten magnificence of their civilization, were tempting themes, which, once chosen, could not have been made unattractive save by some Doctor Dryasdust. Prescott was no Dryasdust; he enjoyed his subjects and delighted in their portrayal; he did not disdain to moralize, like Macaulay with his "New Zealander," over dramatic situations and buried secrets; and he disbelieved in the theory that the duty of the historian is simply to set unadorned facts before the reader. He wrote history as his friend Everett wrote speeches; the oratorical and the historical methods of the "graceful" or "Athenian" Bostonians of 1830–1860 were substantially the same. The method would have been grotesquely unsuitable for some historical themes; Prescott's it suited admirably. It sometimes just missed being tawdry and verbose; "fine writing" is grandiose and wearisome. Prescott's gorgeous metaphors are occasionally mixed; and his

flights of descriptive fancy sometimes become tiresome. He lacked Bancroft's reserve of nature and Motley's reserve of deliberate power. His chief ability lay in scenic portrayal. But he portrayed the whole scene, and in colors not soon to fade or be forgotten. His view was broad enough to include the whole time chosen, and all the events. He also effectively employed, at times, the method of historical contrast and parallel.

The biographer of Prescott, George Ticknor, gives a minutely detailed account * of the formation of Prescott's style. He returned, in mature years, to the study of grammar and rhetoric; he examined his own nature, with its faults and its merits; he insisted that the greatest charms of style must lie in its individualism and its representation or reflection of the character of the man himself; and he steadily refused merely to imitate masters of the writing art. But he wrote and rewrote with fastidious taste, until, in his later works, he was obliged, for the sake of the very results he sought, to give freer rein to his natural powers. He still based his writing, like his life, on minutely drawn rules and systems, but this later Puritanism was but a foundation for work, not an ascetic religion, as it had been two centuries before. Mr. Ticknor states that Prescott's personality went into his books, because of his infirmity of sight, whereby he was forced to ponder long and then to address his readers as it were with the voice and not the pen. The statement, doubtless correct, throws a strong light upon

Prescott's style.

* "Life of William Hickling Prescott," pp. 217–230.

the pages of an historian with whom the word "style" must ever be connected. "His infirmity," says Mr. Ticknor, "was a controlling influence, and is to be counted among the secrets of a manner which has been found at once so simple and so charming. He was compelled to prepare every thing, down to the smallest details, in his memory, and to correct and fashion it all while it was still held there in silent suspense; after which he wrote it down, by means of his noctograph, in the freest and boldest manner, without any opportunity really to change the phraseology as he went along, and with little power to alter or modify it afterwards. This, I doubt not, was among the principal causes of the strength, as well as of the grace, ease, and attractiveness of his style. It gave a life, a freshness, a freedom, both to his thoughts and to his mode of expressing them. . . . He was able to carry what was equal to sixty pages of printed matter in his memory for many days, correcting and finishing its style as he walked or rode or drove for his daily exercise. In 1839, therefore, after going carefully over the whole ground, he said: 'My conclusion is, that the reader may take my style for better or for worse, as it now is.' And to this conclusion he wisely adhered. His manner became, perhaps, a little freer and easier, from continued practice, and from the confidence that success necessarily brings with it, but, in its essential elements and characteristics, it was never changed." *

Prescott's purpose, to make his style a representation of himself, was successfully carried out. In

* Ticknor's "Life of Prescott," 229, 230.

the second volume of Mr. Justin Winsor's "Narative and Critical History of America" (p. 426), is a striking and attractive portrait of the historian. His graceful figure, well-shaped head, delicate features, and gentle expression seem to have been caught by the artist. Prescott sits, writing with his "noctograph," a far-away look in his half-sightless eyes, so that the general effect is both dignified and pitiful. Did ever a man of letters more bravely triumph over great odds? His serene character could be kindled by enthusiasm; and so in his histories we have the sober fidelity of fact, set forth with the glowing art of a romancer. More brilliant than Bancroft, as successful as Parkman in portraying historical episodes, his was the reputation likely to be most widespread in Europe, among all reputations achieved by American historians. In a time when critics are decrying rhetoric, however fine, and praising analysis, be it never so dull, the fame of Prescott is temporarily dimmed, but it cannot pass from sight until, if ever, it shall become necessary to rewrite the lives of Ferdinand and Isabella, and to tell anew the stories of the conquest of Mexico and the conquest of Peru.

Prescott's secretary, at one time, was John Foster Kirk, who, after Prescott's death, intelligently edited the last and standard edition of the works of his master and friend. Mr. Kirk has a place among American historians by reason of his original work: he is the author of a three-volume "History of Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy," which is the fullest account of the last

John Foster Kirk, b. 1824.

great Burgundian duke, and of his struggle with Louis XI. for the possession of Provence and for the erection of an independent Rhine kingdom to rival France. Kirk is like Prescott, in that he is thorough in his search for materials, and wisely chooses an important and comparatively unconsidered subject; among his faults is his too zealous attempt to "rewrite history" in Charles' favor, and to explain, at all hazards, the Duke's military failures. To this is to be added a prolixity hardly warranted by the subject selected, and an exclamatory rhetoric very different from the style of Prescott.

John Lothrop Motley, 1814–1877.

It is a pleasure to trace the history of certain divisions of American literature, not only because of the nature of the books discussed, but also on account of the personal character of the authors of those books. Closely connected with the writing is the writer; and if the writer has that individuality, that culture, and that strength and breadth of character which combine in Motley, the reader takes an increased satisfaction in the literary product. John Lothrop Motley was a notable example of that true culture which was developed on the cold and forbidding shores of New England two centuries after the Puritans founded a free American commonwealth. The American character was his, but that character, as in such lives as Prescott's, Longfellow's, or Lowell's, was developed by the study and personal knowledge of the intellectual treasures of Europe. Motley, in his later years, was the diplomatic representative of his coun-

try in two great European courts; and thus honored the nation which has honored itself by sending so many of its authors as its political representatives abroad. In Europe he continued the prosecution of historical studies planned and begun at home; there he was recognized as a true representative of his country's scholarship and literary ability; and he shared in the important work which was continued between 1825 and 1875, the work of bringing European culture to America, and at the same time of carrying American culture to Europe. In this international exchange of intellectual benefits, both hemispheres have been gainers.

Motley's early writings.

Motley, like Bancroft, Hildreth, and Parkman, began his literary career in other labors than those of an historian. But his novels, "Morton's Hope" and "Merry Mount," belong to a different and higher class of literature than that which includes Bancroft's poems, Hildreth's "Archy Moore," and Parkman's "Vassall Morton." Motley's "Merry Mount," an historical novel of the earliest days of New England, is in several ways a meritorious work. Without rapidity of movement or stirring interest, its quiet style is certainly not dull. Its representations of the grim Puritans and the jovial and aggravating Anglicans of Wollaston Heights, are faithful portraitures; and we feel that we are instructed by an historian who is no special pleader on either side. The old hermit of Boston is a personage whom one remembers long after the book has been laid down. In scene, characterization, and accuracy of historical narration, "Merry

Mount" was a fit precursor of the later and more important works of its author, devoted to other and higher subjects. The book has disappeared from notice, and it perhaps hardly deserves reprinting; but it showed the trend of the author's mind, and proved that a future success was at least possible for him.

It is not always profitable to trace, in minute detail, the progress of events in an author's life. He was born; he went to school or academy; he graduated at college, neglecting some studies and excelling in others; he essayed law or divinity, and grew wearied of it; travelled in Europe; married; contributed to the periodical press; occupied some public station; published his first book. Some such story as this could be told of half our American authors in the nineteenth century, and the filling in of details is comparatively unimportant, as a rule. The chief question that arouses our notice is, more properly, that which relates to an author's final adoption of a high literary life-work. John Lothrop Motley is known, the world over, as the great historian of the Netherlands. How came this to pass? Some know him as novelist, others are not aware that he ever wrote a novel. Some deem him a great diplomat, an honor to the nation, sacrificed to the ignorant spite of a president who could not appreciate him; others reply that his disagreement with an administration, and his friendship for Senator Sumner, when the latter was hostile to that administration, made necessary his removal from a confidential relation with the executive. Others,

again, like to dwell upon his culture, his winsome personal character, his honorable career in the world of thought. Motley, the historian, however, claims our notice now, not Motley, the novelist, essayist, diplomat, man of culture. His life-work forced itself upon him. "I had not," he wrote to his friend Mr. William Amory, of Boston, Prescott's brother-in-law, "I had not first made up my mind to write a history, and then cast about to take up a subject. My subject had taken me up, drawn me on, and absorbed me into itself. It was necessary for me, it seemed, to write the book I had been thinking much of, even if it were destined to fall dead from the press, and I had no inclination or interest to write any other. . . . It was not that I cared about writing a history, but that I felt an inevitable impulse to write *one particular history.*" *

Motley's "History of the Netherlands."

This, clearly, was a noble beginning, and nobly was it followed. Motley's theme was of course closely akin to one upon which Prescott was already working, the "History of Philip the Second"; and the hearty welcome given the younger scholar by Prescott forms one of the pleasantest episodes in the personal experiences of American authorship. "The Rise of the Dutch Republic," thus begun, was written with the historian's painstaking care, after diligent study in the libraries and state-collections of Europe. It forms, in three volumes, the first part of a virtually connected history, of which the later instalments are "The History of the United Netherlands," in four

* O. W. Holmes' "Memoir of Motley," 63, 65.

volumes, and "The Life and Death of John of Barneveld, Advocate of Holland," in two volumes. The reader may separate these works for convenience' sake, but need not, for they are almost a united whole. As interesting as fiction, as eloquent as the best oratory, they are as trustworthy as accuracy and faithful industry could make them. Motley's portraiture of William the Silent is one of the great delineations of history. Not less able, nor less picturesque, is his remarkable account of the character of Queen Elizabeth of England, and of the court and times in which she lived. Writing of the Netherlands, Motley really gives us a military, civil, and social history of Europe in an age of great struggles. He has been accused of partiality and partisanship; but his analysis of the character of William is as just, and where there is need, as pitiless, as that of Philip II. himself. It has been declared that Motley is intensely anti-Catholic. Anti-Roman is the proper word; but his anti-Romanism is no more than a denunciation of the bloody horrors of the Inquisition, and of those awful wars in which the extermination of whole Protestant peoples was the perpetual purpose. The hate and cruelty of Calvinist against Romanist, and the hostilities between Calvinist and Lutheran, are laid bare to the eye of all future time. How Protestants persecuted and killed we are very plainly told by this impartial writer. Their crime was as great, in the moral sense, as that of their foes; but it hurried far fewer out of the world of terror and of blood. He who quarrels

with Motley really quarrels with events, not with their recorder. His readers study under the guidance of a masterly political analyst, a writer whose style is vivid and eloquent, and an historian who can both gather facts and winnow truth from falsehood, and show a high appreciation of the spirit of liberty which moved great actions in stirring times. He was impulsive and occasionally haughty, as a man, and also in some of his judgments; but he was loyal to his idea of truth and freedom. "Stirring vitality" is the apt descriptive phrase applied to Motley by his friend and biographer; and it was this, with his intense love of religious and political freedom, which enabled him to give us "the long roll of glowing tapestry he has woven for us, with all its life-like portraits, its almost moving pageants, its sieges where we can see the artillery flashing, its battle-fields with their smoke and fire,—pictures which cannot fade, and which will preserve his name interwoven with their own enduring colors." *

The two greatest historians America has produced—Bancroft and Motley—were great because they were American historians, imbued with the national spirit of liberty.

Among living American historians and biographers who have selected foreign themes, the name of Eugene Schuyler demands attention, though his future literary career cannot be forecast. His two-volume "Life of Peter the Great"—as truly a history as a biog-

Eugene Schuyler b. 1840.

Schuyler's Life of Peter the Great.

* Holmes' "Life of Motley," 223, 224.

raphy—is undoubtedly the standard life of the great Russian, even if we take into view the literature of the world. This position it has won by the fulness of its preliminary investigations, pursued during the diplomatic career which almost seems an inevitable element in the work of American historians; and also by the completeness of its plan and the minuteness and accuracy of its details. Its one fault is unfortunate, almost fatal. The book, which ought to have been interesting to the degree of romance, is dull from beginning to end. It is undoubtedly a *magnum opus*, but it must be read as a task, undertaken with resolution and completed with self-congratulation. Fortunate would Schuyler have been had he caught the charm of Motley's unpretending little essay on Peter, originally prepared as a review article, and long afterwards reprinted in a modest pamphlet.

This chapter on American historical writers may worthily be closed with a mention of the one great purely literary history thus far produced in the country. George Ticknor's "History of Spanish Literature" was the work of a man of broad and deep culture, trained in the best circles of his own country, and the friend and associate of many of the great Europeans of his day. The history, based upon long studies and patient accumulations of material, is consulted as the best, and, for the time, the ultimate, authority on its interesting theme. The highest tribute paid to its merit is the fact that, in our age of great critical authority, no contemporary scholar has undertaken

George Ticknor, 1791–1871.

Ticknor's "History of Spanish Literature."

to supplant it. Ticknor was fortunate in being able to treat of a body of literature which is great and also substantially complete; for the literary glory of Spain belongs, like that of Italy, to the past. In perspective, in justice of critical praise and blame, and in accuracy of statement, Ticknor's "History of Spanish Literature" is, in some respects, the best literary record devoted by a foreigner to the books of any country. Inferior to Taine's "English Literature" in brilliancy and beauty of style, it easily surpasses that most famous of recent criticisms in its candor and impartiality of thought and judgment and in its evenness of execution.

CHAPTER XII.

BORDERLANDS OF AMERICAN LITERATURE.

LITERATURE, if strictly defined, cannot be said to include those books which have a purpose chiefly technical.

We must admit that literature has been enriched by some books not wholly ideal in aim, and not written for unpractical purposes. Thus, history and biography instruct; orations are delivered for the sake of clients or of governmental measures; philosophy and pedagogy are enshrined, perhaps, in an external adornment of literary style; theology is taught in books that belong to the choicest division of literature; prayers and creeds of noble verbal form seek the benefit, as well as the ideal pleasure, of the individual; and even poetry is didactic, moral, or devout. Literature, pure and simple, may both teach and preach; an English or American critic, at least, will not consent to divorce beauty from duty, though not denying that each may exist without the other.

The "Literature of Science."

But the critic and the reader must always remember that there are "books that are no books," in the literary sense. They may be useful potent, indispensable; but they are not

things of beauty that are joys forever; their beauty is not its own excuse for being. Such, pre-eminently, are the majority of scientific books printed in this century of scientific progress. American thought has worked through its stages of religious propagandism, political liberation, and intellectual subserviency, to its own rights and achievements; and among these achievements are many triumphs in scientific fields. Science, however, instinctively puts the matter before the manner, and is content to work in the borderlands of literature, neither making unwarrantable claims nor yielding to literature within the scientific province. It will not be expected that, in a survey of American literary growth, I shall discuss those scientific treatises which, farther removed than are theology and philosophy from the development of national literature, would demand review in a separate work, on a widely different plan.

The student of American intellectual history is not surprised to find that scientific investigation, in a country whose geography, geology, fauna, and flora were new to Europeans, antedated the rise of pure literature, and has not grown less important, up to the present time. The early scientific services of Benjamin Franklin have already been mentioned. They were shared by other Pennsylvanians, among whom American science was at first most encouraged and developed. John Bartram's botanical garden on the Schuylkill was known in Europe, and the warm-hearted Linnæus declared the plain Chester Coun-

John Bartram, 1701–1777.

ty Friend, "the greatest natural botanist in the world." David Rittenhouse, the modest maker of clocks and scientific instruments, was also a surveyor and mathematician, a physicist and astronomer, a doctor of laws, a fellow of the Royal Society, and Franklin's successor as president of the American Philosophical Society. This self-educated scientist also rose to a seat in the first constitutional convention of the State of Pennsylvania, and was afterward State Treasurer, and director of the national mint. Franklin was not the only scientific man in Pennsylvania who could win success in practical politics. Rittenhouse's eulogist, Benjamin Rush, who had been trained in the best medical schools of Europe, promoted the Revolution, signed the Declaration of Independence, labored as surgeon in the Revolutionary war, greatly furthered medical education in Philadelphia, which became the medical capital of the country, and concerned himself with the general scientific, social, and philanthropic welfare of his city and nation. Benjamin Thompson, a Massachusetts lad, having no more than an elementary training in local academies, went to England as a liberal Tory during the Revolution, fought on the British side in that war, in 1783 became a soldier in the Bavarian army, rose to high military, civil, and academic honors, performed for Bavaria many social services like those done for Pennsylvania by Franklin, and afterward, in Paris, London, and elsewhere, made important discoveries or experiments in the direc-

David Rittenhouse, 1732–1796.

Benjamin Rush, 1745–1813.

Benjamin Thompson, Count Rumford, 1753–1814.

tion of modern physical investigation. Romance and beneficence united in his career, which, though cosmopolitan, was distinguished by an energy peculiarly American, and by an American conviction that science should be made practically and widely beneficial. Samuel Latham Mitchill, of the State of New York, studied medicine abroad, and law at home, favored and shared in the work of medical instruction in New York City, founded influential societies, and studied science to such advantage that his writings thereupon were esteemed in their day. It was no accident, but a result of the temper of American scientific thought, that Mitchill sat in the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States. In Yale College, at the same time, the elder Silliman was working on lines similar to those of Mitchill in the neighboring State, and was developing geological, mineralogical, chemical, and physical pursuits, the results of which he made widely accessible by his popular lectures, and by his American *Journal of Science and Arts.*

Samuel Latham Mitchill, 1764–1831.

Benjamin Silliman, Sr., 1779–1864.

These men were the pioneers of American science; and their task was a harder one, in some ways, than that of our literary pioneers. After them other workers pushed farther, and achieved results more important, but not more creditable. Alexander Wilson began the study of native birds, and described them, in vivid language, in his "American Ornithology." The Louisianian Audubon took up the task where the Scotchman Wilson had left it, and offered, in his

Alexander Wilson, 1766–1813.

John James Audubon, 1780–1851.

"Birds of America," one of the most considerable contributions ever made to ornithological science. Around his life, as around the lives of so many fellow-workers, hung an atmosphere brightened by the light of romance, which glowed less warmly above such later students of bird-life as the scientist Elliott Coues, or the essayist John Burroughs. Romance, however, will always be associated with such names as that of Schoolcraft, the ethnologist, whose huge work, "Information respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States" has already been cited in these pages. Among American books of travel, also, such as those recounting the explorations of Stanley in the "dark continent," or of many an intrepid explorer in Arctic ice, are records which only lack the kindling imagination and graphic power of a great writer to give them a more permanent place in public renown.

Elliott Coues, b. 1842.

Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, 1793–1864.

Henry M. Stanley.

In law, and in political and social science, American writers have fully profited by the lessons taught by the nation-makers discussed in the chapter devoted to political literature. Even when one reads such law-books as Chancellor Kent's standard "Commentaries on American Law," he finds matter for literary praise in the author's solid English. Wheaton's "International Law," with less literary excellence, merits a similar recognition from other than jurists. Strength of thought combines with force of expression in the volumes of Wheaton's successor, the erudite and

James Kent, 1763–1847.

Henry Wheaton, 1785–1848.

versatile President Woolsey, of Yale, whose writings, with an aptitude born of the needs of a new country, turn from Greek scholarship to political science, and from the intercourse of nations to matters of Bible revision. This intellectual alertness was observable in the varied works of Francis Lieber. Civil liberty and self-government were expounded by Lieber as by a Berlin-born Teuton who had changed his skies and thereby quickened his mind. What one writer has boldly called *American* political economy, set forth in the works of that staunch old protectionist, Carey, of Pennsylvania, itself demands, however unwisely, the extremest liberty, that of economic isolation. As, in the early days of America, clergymen sought to combine philosophy with religion, so President Wayland, of Brown University, Rhode Island, was a metaphysician who felt no rude jarring of subjects when he turned from moral science to political economy. These workers were often compelled to combine the duties of elementary instructors of their countrymen with those of original investigators; but they bravely accepted the irksome task made necessary by their time and environment. With equal cheer was the same American necessity assumed by the geologist Hitchcock, president of Amherst College; by James D. Dana, the chief of our living geologists; and by Agassiz himself, doubtless the greatest name in the records of the geology and ichthyology of his adopted land. Guyot, Agassiz' fellow-countryman (both were of

Theodore Dwight Woolsey, b. 1801.

Francis Lieber, 1800–1872.

Henry Charles Carey, 1793–1879.

Francis Wayland, 1796–1865.

Edward Hitchcock, 1793–1864.

James Dwight Dana, b. 1813.

Swiss birth), did not hesitate to prepare elementary text-books for school use, though a physical geographer of competence in the higher scientific investigations. Asa Gray, the foremost American botanist, is the author of many text-books, some of them little more than primers. Since there is no question of the scientific standing, in more remote and abstruse investigations, of men like Dana and Gray and Agassiz, I cannot but deem their willingness to perform the drudgery of the elementary teacher, the text-book maker, or the popular lecturer, one potent cause of the rapid development of American science. They did it a service like that done to American culture by Longfellow in his early years, and they willingly adopted similar methods.

Louis Jean Rudolph Agassiz, 1807–1873.

Arnold Henry Guyot, 1807–1884.

Asa Gray, 1810.

The same remark is applicable to several authors of books in the department of biblical archæology, a modern division of science in which American laborers have achieved honorable results. Edward Robinson, the pioneer in Palestine exploration ; Samuel C. Bartlett, the author of " From Egypt to Palestine " ; Henry Clay Trumbull, who established the location of the site of Kadesh-Barnea ; and others of equal learning, who have not as yet published volumes,—such men, content to forego literary rewards while working successfully on scholarly lines, have helped to solidify American thought, and to identify its labors with those of old-world savants in old-world fields. The significance of this new element in American intellectual progress is apparent.

Biblical archæology.

Several of the men just named were college professors, busied in daily work in the class-room or laboratory, and devoting no more than their spare time to higher studies. The endowment of research is practically non-existent in America. Scientific thought has had to fight for a little leisure for broader work. In that leisure have been prepared Young's astronomical treatises; Cooke's "Religion and Chemistry"; Whitney's "Language and the Study of Language," "The Life and Growth of Language," and "Oriental and Linguistic Studies"; Hadley's Greek grammars and philological essays; Lewis' "The Bible and Science," and "Six Days of Creation." These books have no close relation with literature; but, whatever their scientific merits or demerits, they illustrate the diligence and self-sacrifice common in a growing department of American thought. The pressure upon the American educator is illustrated in the experience of Professor Hadley, who, devoting his life to Greek philology, found time for good occasional work in early English, and at last turned with most eager interest to the study of Roman law. This pressure endangers both health and scholarship; it cannot produce the best work; it departs in the day of the specialist; but, though perilous, it is stimulating. A great educator like Horace Mann left behind him no standard treatise on pedagogy, but a vitalizing influence in American schools. Literature got little from him; the nation much.

Charles Augustus Young, b. 1834.

Josiah Parsons Cooke, b. 1827.

William Dwight Whitney, b. 1827.

James Hadley, 1821–1872.

Tayler Lewis, 1802–1877.

Horace Mann, 1796–1859.

George Perkins Marsh, 1801–1882.

Nearer literature than the books of most of the scientists just named, are the writings of G. P. Marsh, who first gave to America works on English philology of the higher class, and whose broad and deep scholarship could also turn to such a theme as "The Earth as Modified by Human Action." Of literary character, too, are the books of John William Draper, 1811–1882.

John W. Draper, who wrote a dry history of the American civil war, and a weighty but unsympathetic "History of the Intellectual Development of Europe." And on the very borderland of literature stand four books with which I may close this catalogue, introduced for its significance, and not pretending or desiring to be complete. These four books, combining the accuracy of science with the ideality of literature, are Dr. Thomas Hill, b. 1818.

Thomas Hill's "Geometry and Faith"; Professor Benjamin Peirce's "Ideality in the Physical Sciences"; and those works by an obscure and modest thinker, Elisha Mulford's "The Nation," and "The Republic of God." Benjamin Peirce, 1809–1880. Elisha Mulford, 1833–1885.

"Ideality of Physical Sciences," "The Republic of God," *—the very titles are poems and prophecies.

American literature is not yet so old as other im-

* MULFORD: AUTHOR OF "THE NATION" AND "THE REPUBLIC OF GOD."

"Unnoted as the setting of a star
He passed; and sect and party scarcely knew
When from their midst a sage and seer withdrew
To fitter audience, where the great dead are
In God's republic of the heart and mind,
Leaving no purer, nobler soul behind."

—*John Greenleaf Whittier.*

portant literatures of the world, nor is it so broad in its work. It strikes deep in certain places, but it has not yet explored all mines of thought. This much, however, may be said: it has become established and has learned to submit to catholic estimates, not special estimates. Its borderlands are like those of other national literatures. A book attracts no notice because it is American. Theological writing, once so important, takes its own place, and does not, save in rare instances, ask to be measured by literary standards. Ethics is superadded to art, but does not claim to supplant art, or to be called art, so long as it rests on the ethical plane alone. Philosophy is studied as philosophy, not as a part of a preconceived theological scheme. It is theistic and optimistic, but not denominational or timid. History written by Americans succeeds or fails not because of its quaintness or flavor of the soil. American political writing is still eagerly read in Europe; our message to the world was never more seriously studied than now; but it is studied for the light it throws upon old-world problems, not for its revelations of an unfamiliar folk-character or a new idea of liberty. American science is no longer restricted to local investigations and descriptions. All along the line of work there is an international exchange of intellectual products. American literature no longer claims to be considered an "infant industry."

American literature established.

The last survival of the old idea, that something fresh and novel is to be sought in the United States is found in the current English and Continental idea

of "American humor." Jesters and humorists of all degrees, from the coarse "paragrapher" of a far-western newspaper to Lowell himself, are popular on European railways and bookstalls. Crude and repulsive writing, sometimes adorned with appropriate pictures, is read with delight in parts of Europe, and deemed not only amusing but national, characteristic, representative. Before Lowell became so well known in England as a man of the broadest culture, he was regarded as no more than a dialect humorist. Bret Harte, Mark Twain, Artemus Ward, Nasby, and the various professional newspaper "wits" have been put, by the half-educated, into the representative seats that belong to Emerson or Hawthorne. The descendants of those who, as Irving said, were surprised to find an American with a quill in his hand and not on his head, now profess astonishment that America should make literary claims higher than those which can be advanced in behalf of "Innocents Abroad."

American humor.

The wit and humor of Franklin, Irving, Holmes, Curtis, Lowell, Aldrich, and Bret Harte form an integral part of American literature, and, as such, are duly discussed in other parts of this work. Wit and humor, if genuine, can never be banished to the borderlands of literature. Chaucer and Molière are not less great because of their jests. But there is a class of authors ranking below Irving or Lowell, and lacking the higher artistic or moral purpose of the greater humorists, who amuse a generation and then pass from sight. Every period demands a new manner of jest, after the current fashion. Seventy-

five years ago our great-grandfathers laughed at the jokes or satires of H. H. Brackinridge or Thomas Green Fessenden; but the very names of Brackinridge's "Modern Chivalry" and Fessenden's "Terrible Tractoration" are forgotten. Then came Frederick S. Cozzens, with his "Sparrowgrass Papers," Judge Haliburton and "Sam Slick," "Q. K. Philander Doesticks," Lieutenant Derby and his "John Phœnix Papers," or Saxe, with his rapidly moving travesties and his easily rhyming puns. The civil war had its own set of humorists, now as far out of memory as the "sparkling" Willis of our sentimental period. The dialect and the semi-profane moralizing of Hay's poems are already passing into the shadows of oblivion, which have partially enveloped Leland's "Hans Breitmann" and Carleton's "Betsey." The reigning favorites of the day are Frank R. Stockton, Joel Chandler Harris, the various newspaper jokers, and "Mark Twain." But the creators of "Pomona" and "Rudder Grange," of "Uncle Remus and his Folk-lore Stories," and of "Innocents Abroad," clever as they are, must make hay while the sun shines. Twenty years hence, unless they chance to enshrine their wit in some higher literary achievement, their unknown successors will be the privileged comedians of the republic. Humor alone never gives its masters a place in literature; it must coexist with literary qualities, and must usually be joined with such pathos as one finds in Lamb, Hood, Irving, or Holmes. As for wit, how many books can the critic find that live by reason of mere wit? Even the later English

Samuel Langhorne Clemens, "Mark Twain," b. 1835.

drama, opulent in wit, as it used to be thought, has left in current favor, to-day, but two comedies, or perhaps three. It may be that the salt in Hay's "Jim Bludso" and "Little Breeches," or Carleton's "Betsey and I are Out," will save for them some little place in the literature of the future; but one prophesies with hesitation in the case of poems like these, though they add pathos to humor and have a genuine flavor of the soil.

The flavor of the soil.

It is the flavor of the soil, in American humor, that explains its popularity in Europe. It is deemed fresh, natural, and national; hence, it is read and enjoyed without much wish to distinguish between its higher and lower varieties, and without any deep interest in the question whether it be literature at all. All this is permissible and easy of explanation; but foreign readers and home producers must remember that temporary amusement, not literary product, is the thing sought and given.

Satire.

Two or three divisions of American humor deserve somewhat more respectful treatment. One of these is political satire, shown in its higher and keener form in Lowell's "Biglow Papers," and brought within the comprehension of all in the letters of "Petroleum V. Nasby."

David Ross Locke, "Petroleum Vesuvius Nasby," b. 1833.

The creator of "Nasby," selecting a coarse, vulgar, and selfish type of sot, surrounds him with rude personages and the environment of an illiterate village, and makes him the incarnation of the most ignorant, reactionary, and sordid elements in American politics. Nasby is backwoods

preacher, "reformer," "workingman," postmaster, or chronic office-seeker, as the case demands. A "place" under government, a glass of whiskey, a clean shirt, and a dollar bill are luxuries he can obtain but seldom. His unblushing candor of rascality, and his unswerving fidelity to his simple principles of personal and political selfishness, make him a perennial figure in politics; so Nasby, in the shifting scenes since the war of 1861, has not become a wearisome or unprofitable figure. In him we see vicious and low political motives stripped of their pretences, and therefore we recognize a figure that points a moral as well as raises a laugh. Nasby, in a very different field, resembles Lowell in piercing to the heart of sham, and making that heart reveal its own baseness.

Charles Farrar Browne, "Artemus Ward," 1834–1867.

The same satirical purpose is occasionally perceptible in "Artemus Ward," an American humorist whose fame has at least lasted for a generation. Artemus is usually, however, a wit who amuses by his absurd and naïvely quiet surprises. "N. B.—Mr. Ward will pay no debts of his own contracting"—this line, on the show-bill of one of his humorous lectures, may stand as a sample of his whole method. This element of surprise is that which makes us laugh at his war-sayings, his panorama-descriptions, his reflections by the tomb of "William W. Shakespeare," and his kindly assertion that Chaucer was a great poet, but could n't spell; or even, at times, at his coarse and repulsive lectures on the "Mormons." Artemus Ward anticipated Mark Twain as a representative of calm American

irreverence, ready to ridicule every thing not in a high degree sacred or lovable; but, like Mark Twain's, his lampoons were either made for the sake of fun alone, or for the ridicule of solemn pretence and hypocrisy. He is not the "characteristic American humorist," because there is no such thing as characteristic American humor. The English mind in its American home is alert and fond of puns, unexpected turns of thought, and the amusement caused by "a shock of surprise, produced by a falsehood plausibly pretending to be true, or by a truism pretending to be a novelty." * That is all.

Henry W. Shaw, "Josh Billings," 1818–1885.

One American humorist of later days, the late Henry W. Shaw, known by his pseudonym of "Josh Billings," reminds us of the homely common-sense which, always a characteristic of the better Saxons, was notably exemplified in the "Poor Richard" sayings of Franklin. Josh Billings, like Franklin, made almanacs; and though he used a pseudo-illiterate misspelling, and pretended to be jocose rather than seriously aphoristic, the philosophy of common-sense was never lost to view. Josh Billings, in such writings as his "Essy on the Muel," or parts of the rambling and oft-changed lecture on "Milk," could be as coarse as Artemus Ward,—or Thackeray at times; but we can forgive his coarseness for the sake of his wisdom, wit, and telling conciseness. Mere buffoonery is by no means his most conspicuous quality. His wit is above that which has been said to be "local and middle-class." Himself a man of the people, and of thoroughly rural and

* John Nichol: "American Literature," 405.

homespun life, he was both national and universal. A plain and jocose American's view of life,—that is what he gives us in his "wise saws and modern instances." "With me," he once said, "every thing must be put in two or three lines." He could read his lectures backwards as well as forwards. He did not always raise a laugh, but he seldom failed to make a point. A London review, a few years ago, successfully tried the experiment of translating his proverbs into ordinary English, and claimed that their matter, without their manner, would give them a long life. Probably the review was wrong; the 127,000 annual copies of Josh Billings' "Farmer's Allminax" will become as rare as "Poor Richard's;" and his clever sayings, which miss being true literature, will remain on the borderland, and suffer from increasing neglect. But one finds something significant and hopeful, for literature itself, in the fact that from the midst of the plainest class of a hard-working and practical people can come a professional jester who can preach as well and as wittily as Josh Billings in such sayings as these:

Menny people spend their time trieing to find the hole whar sin got into the world—if two men brake through the ice into a mill-pond, they had better hunt for some good hole tew get out, rather than get into a long argument about the hole they cum to fall in.

There iz a hundred different kinds ov religion, but only one kind ov piety.

The more learning a man acquires, the more suspishus he will be ov what he knows: "beware ov the man ov one book."

Flattery iz like Kolone water, tew be smelt of, not swallowed.

If there iz a man more base than all others on God's footstool, it iz the one who will weaken yu over a bottle ov wine, and then take the advantage ov yu.

In this world thare is grate deal ov what is called virtew that iz nothing more than vice, tired out.

Reason was given us, not to prove what we kan't understand, but to rationally understand what we kan prove.

When Billings said: "Politeness haz won more viktorys than logick ever haz," he was simply putting into common phrase, for common people, Emerson's stanza on "Tact":

> "What boots it, thy virtue,
> What profit thy parts,
> While one thing thou lackest,—
> The art of all arts?"

And a whole farmer's gospel of Franklinian frugality and self-reliance was put into one capital quatrain printed in a "Farmer's Allminax":

> He who by farmin wood git rich,
> Must dig, and ho, and plant, and sich:
> Work hard awl day, sleep hard awl nite,
> Save evry cent, and not git tite.

As Billings himself once said: "Humor must be based on truth. It is because a thing is ludicrous and at the same time true to nature that people laugh at it. Now, Artemus Ward was not a humorist, but he was the drollest man the country has ever produced. Writers who make their effects by hyperbole are not humorists. Genuine humor lasts forever, because it is true."

Here I must bring to a close this discussion of the development of American prose literature,

with the exception of the department of fiction, which is reserved, with that of poetry, for consideration in a second and concluding volume. If any part of that literature shall last forever, it will be because it is true—true in thought and in art. It may be that even the better books which compose what we now call American literature will prove but the beginning of a greater future. The critic and the reader, perhaps, have thus far traced but a few footpaths across the borderland of the national literature of the times to come.

" 'T is fit the forest fall,
The steep be graded,
The mountain tunnelled,
The sand shaded,
The orchard planted,
The globe tilled,
The prairie granted,
The steamer built.

Let man serve law for man ;
Live for friendship, live for love,
For truth's and harmony's behoof;
The state may follow how it can,
As Olympus follows Jove.

Yet do not I implore
The wrinkled shopman to my sounding woods.
Nor bid the unwilling senator
Ask votes of thrushes in the solitudes.
Every one to his chosen work ;—
Foolish hands may mix and mar;
Wise and sure the issues are.
Round they roll till dark is light,
Sex to sex, and even to odd ;—
The over-god

Who marries Right to Might,
Who peoples, unpeoples ;—
He who exterminates
Races by stronger races,
Black by white faces,—
Knows to bring honey
Out of the lion ;
Grafts gentlest scion
On pirate and Turk.

The Cossack eats Poland,
Like stolen fruit ;
Her last noble is ruined,
Her last poet mute :
Straight, into double band
The victors divide ;
Half for freedom strike and stand ;—
The astonished Muse finds thousands at her side."

AMERICAN LITERATURE

1607-1885

II.

AMERICAN POETRY AND FICTION

BY

CHARLES F. RICHARDSON

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CHAPTER I.

EARLY VERSE-MAKING IN AMERICA.

POETRY is the rhythmical expression of beauty or imagination, the verbal utterance of the ideal, and therefore the highest and most permanent form of literature.

According to this definition, it is easy to see that very little poetry was produced in America before the close of the eighteenth century. Much of the early verse of the colonies and states was unrhythmical, and most of it was neither beautiful nor imaginative. The human soul was here, and the glory of nature; but genius was smothered or non-existent, and poetic art was almost wholly lacking. Puritan theology in New England could no more produce poetry than it could paint a Sistine Madonna. Its theological force was intense, but it was neither gracious nor serene. Something more than intensity is needed in the production of a true poem. Puritanism could preach, write diaries and descriptions, and make an occasional eloquent speech for liberty; but of the poetic art it had not an idea. It believed that saints were born, not made; but its poets were neither born nor made. The broad, thorough culture of John Milton, who could apprehend Dante and Shakespeare, as well as

Moses and Paul, was impossible in early Massachusetts. Even an Andrew Marvell was not to be expected there. The soul was a part of the scheme of redemption, not a spontaneous singer of the beautiful. Nature, whether august on the sea-coast or fragrant by the brook-side, was of a lost world; and the Puritan had no idea that any earthly beauty could be its own excuse for being.

In the middle and southern colonies the state of things was no better. I suppose I shall hardly be required to demonstrate the statement that poetry was not to be expected from the brains or hands of the Dutchmen of New Amsterdam. The Pennsylvania Friends were as estimable and honest as they are now; but then, as now, they were unliterary. The various representatives of non-English nations, in the middle colonies, neither transplanted their own literatures nor aided the English. The Roman Catholics of Maryland were not a book-making folk; and the cavaliers of Virginia left behind them the lyrical power of the aristocratic songsters of England in the seventeenth century. The poetic prospect in the Atlantic colonies, prior to 1700, was more discouraging than it is in Canada to-day; and it must be confessed that the promise of better things had not become brilliant even as late as 1800. It is my opinion that only one true poem was produced in America before the latter year; and I am sure that no one could select a dozen pieces, of all the verse then in existence, deserving the name of poem, under the most liberal definition.

There is a bibliographical curiosity much prized by collectors of Americana, and well known to antiquarians, called "The Bay Psalm Book." This famous volume, which appeared in 1640, was the first printed book produced within the present limits of the United States. It consists of a (so-called) metrical version of the Psalms, translated directly from Hebrew into English by several ministers of Massachusetts Bay. One hesitates to declare definitely that this is the worst book of verse ever produced in America, for the candidates for the lowest place are many, and I can recall at least one "poem" produced in our own day, the author of which proceeded on the theory that blank verse consists simply of ten prose syllables, beginning with a capital letter. But the "Bay Psalm Book" is so wretched a collection of pious doggerel that, on the whole, the philosophic reader rejoices at its badness. American verse had made a beginning, and was sure to rise, for the adequate reason that it could not sink any lower. In comparison with the "Bay Psalm Book" that dullest of Middle-English poems, the "Ormulum," is a masterpiece of genius and a model of metrical skill. When we consider that these translators of the Psalms might have availed themselves of the noble versions in the Wycliffe, Bishops', and King James Bibles, but preferred to spoil everything for the sake of wretched rhymes or lines quite defying scansion, we are tempted to a severity that is mitigated by the

The Bay Psalm Book, 1640.

reflection that poetry is still confused with sing-song in many excellent minds; and that the worst metrical hymn is sometimes deemed more devout than the best chant of rhythmical prose.

Notwithstanding the wealth of poetry then existent in England, the Puritans had no notion of the difference between good verse and bad. Productions whose poverty of thought and nakedness of form were nothing less than pitiful, they accepted with gratitude and hailed with extravagant enthusiasm. One writer produced a "poem," and another, perhaps in verse, greeted that poem with loud acclaim; but both the praiser and the praised have long since been shrouded in the obscurity from which, indeed, they never emerged save in the provincial estimate. Not until the poets of the "Dunciad" are revered as masters need the literary historian analyze the achievements or record the names of New England's clerical bards of the seventeenth century. Let us give them the credit of gallantry, however, for they politely found their Tenth Muse in Anne Bradstreet, the first woman in America who entered the ranks of authorship, and the first person who put forth a volume of verse in that part of the country from which the best American poetry was to spring. The merit of Mrs. Bradstreet's poems is rather negative than positive; they are not so bad as they might have been, and occasionally proffer a good thought or a decent line. It would be possible, it seems to me, for

Anne (Dudley) Bradstreet, 1612–1672.

some other person than a literary historian, or a proof-reader, to read her "works," especially when adorned by the fair type and broad margins of the excellent modern reprint.* To be sure, when wandering through her elegiac verse, the reader will exclaim, with Southey, "my days among the dead are passed," though he can hardly add that these dead are "the mighty minds of old." His courage will flag long before the end of the ponderous poems devoted respectively to "The Four Elements" and "The Four Monarchies," and at last he will think affectionately of the colophon of some ancient volumes: "Explicit Liber: Laus Deo." But Mrs. Bradstreet, though not a poet, possessed a thoughtful mind, which she developed to the best of her meagre opportunities; and some of her miscellaneous reflections in prose, entitled "Meditations, Divine and Moral," are of decided merit, easily surpassing the most ambitious of her labored productions in verse.

"The Day of Doom," by the Reverend Michael Wigglesworth, far surpassed in popularity the much-praised productions of the Tenth Muse. A good motto for the poem would have been these two lines from a hymn once sung in the churches:

Michael Wigglesworth, 1631–1715.

> "My thoughts on awful subjects roll,
> Damnation and the dead."

"The Day of Doom" was an attempt to apply

* Edited by John Harvard Ellis; Charlestown, Mass., 1867.

the principles of extreme seventeenth-century Calvinism to the final adjustment of the unseen and unknowable, and incidentally to produce a poem. This attempt was not, in my view, entirely successful; but a different opinion was held by the many readers who thumbed its pages for a hundred years. They were sure it was true, and so they bought and prized it, in edition after edition, at a time when the vaporings of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" or the semi-pagan moral virtues of "The Faerie Queene" were unknown in Massachusetts, even by title.* Cotton Mather said that it had often been reprinted in Old England and New, and might perhaps instruct children "till the Day itself ârrive." The work is absolutely devoid of merit, save in its evident sincerity. At great length, and with the most deliberate argumentation, it teaches the horrible doctrine of the damnation of non-elect infants because of the sin of Adam as federal head. Jonathan Edwards' famous spider sermon, with all its mixture of brimstone and blood, was at least more tolerable than this, for it treated (presumably) of adults, and made no pretension to be a poem.

"The Day of Doom," like "The Bay Psalm

* "Before 1700 there was not in Massachusetts, so far as is known, a copy of Shakespeare's or of Milton's poems; and as late as 1723, whatever may have been in private hands, Harvard College library lacked Addison, Atterbury, Bolingbroke, Dryden, Gay, Locke, Pope, Prior, Steele, Swift, and Young. . . . . Shakespeare was not reprinted in New England until 1802–1804, nor do I find Milton until 1796, though it was found twenty years earlier in Philadelphia."—Mellen Chamberlain, librarian of the Boston Public Library; address at the dedication of the Brooks Library, Brattleborough, Vt., Jan. 25, 1887.

Book" and Mrs. Bradstreet's volume, is not a piece of literature; the student notes it only as a curiosity, and as a pitiful indication of the literary poverty of the days and the land in which it was popular. Its most famous line, in which Wigglesworth metamorphoses the child-loving and child-blessing Christ into one who assigns lost infants to "the easiest room in Hell," occurs in a poem of which one part is as bad as another, from the literary stand-point, though perhaps not as repugnant to the moral sense as this celebrated example of the author's modesty and charity. The children say, in the course of their appeal for mercy:

> O great Creator, why was our Nature
> depraved and forlorn?
> Why so defil'd, and made so vil'd
> whilst we were yet unborn?
> If it be just, and needs we must
> transgressors reck'ned be,
> Thy Mercy Lord, to us afford,
> which sinners hath set free.

But the judge elaborately refutes them, with such arguments as these:

> Would you have griev'd to have receiv'd
> through *Adam* so much good,
> As had been your for evermore,
> if he at first had stood?
> Would you have said, we ne'r obey'd,
> nor did thy Laws regard;
> It ill befits with benefits
> us, Lord, so to reward.
>
> Since then to share in his welfare
> you could have been content,

You may with reason share in his treason,
and in the punishment.
Hence you were born in state forlorn,
with Natures so depraved:
Death was your due, because that you
had thus yourselves behaved.*

And this was the favorite poem of that New England which was to produce an Emerson, a Longfellow, and a Poe,—a poem written during the lifetime of Milton and Dryden, and locally overshadowing the fame of the best of their productions.

In the pre-revolutionary procession of New England bards, half forgotten and all unread, there are some picturesque figures, standing forth because of personal rather than poetical qualities, and therefore unmentioned here; though Mrs. Bradstreet's clerical companions on the Massachusetts Parnassus were for the most part an indistinguishable group, without salient characteristics or individual merits. It is not strange, perhaps, that Mrs. Bradstreet herself keeps a little larger place in our minds because she was the earliest of our professional poets, and the earliest American woman who won any literary renown. Yet more conspicuous in quaint loneliness was that poor negro girl, Phillis Wheatley, whose clever verses, neatly turned according to the prevalent English fashion, pleased the Bostonians during the latter half of the eighteenth century. Born in Africa, Phillis was a precocious household pet, in the last days of African slavery

Phillis Wheatley, 1750?–1784.

* I quote from an edition published in Boston as late as 1828.

in New England. Her little booklet of "Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral," was published in London in 1773, and has several times been reprinted,—as poetry, as a curiosity, or as an abolition argument. There seems no reason to doubt the genuineness of the poems, as compositions of the girl herself; the early editions contained attestations signed by eighteen aristocratic Bostonians, to the fact that they "were written by Phillis, a young negro girl, who was but a few years since, brought an uncultivated Barbarian from Africa, and has ever since been, and now is, under the disadvantage of serving as a Slave in a family in this town." Some of the poems are of decided excellence; good lines of the prevalent "classic" style, are not hard to find; the general merit of the collection easily surpasses that of Mrs. Bradstreet's; and when we make allowance for its artificiality, we may readily admit that it equals the average first volume of poems to-day—written, like these, "for the amusement of the author," who of course "had no intention ever to have [*sic*] published them." The book remains the principal literary achievement of the colored race in America.

Toward the close of the eighteenth century the storm-centre of American poetry seemed to move southward, hovering for a time over Yale College and Connecticut. Timothy Dwight, grandson of Jonathan Edwards, and president of Yale from 1795 to 1817, published at Hartford, in 1785, "The Conquest of Canäan, a Poem, in Eleven Books." The author, in his

Timothy Dwight, 1752–1817.

Johnsonian preface, written in the balanced sentences then in vogue, felicitates himself that "the poem is the first of the kind which has been published in this country"; and not unnaturally, therefore, dedicates it "To his Excellency, George Washington, Esquire, Commander-in-chief of the American Armies, The Saviour of his Country, The Supporter of Freedom, and the Benefactor of Mankind." If the soldier Washington ever read these stories of the wars of "Canäan," he found them decorously written in rhymed iambic pentameters, fashioned strictly in accordance with the prevalent English style, and duly equipped with antitheses, "hovering accents," and all the requisities of artificial-heroic verse:

> Behold these scenes expanding to thy soul!
> From orient realms what blackening armies roll!
> See their proud Monarch, in yon glimmering car,
> Leads his strong host, and points the waste of war.
> Till, rais'd by Heaven, the youth, whose early bloom
> Gives a fair promise of his worth to come,
> That second Irad, Othniel, lifts his hand,
> And sweeps the heathens from his wasted land, etc.

There were 304 pages of verse like this, "including 9,672 lines," wrote a long-dead hand on the last page of the copy before me. Most could raise the flowers in 1785, for all had got the seed. Dr. Dwight's trig little epic, in its strong leather covers, was found in many a meagre bookcase in the early days of the republic. If its qualities are those of industry and occasional stiff merit, rather than genius, and if it is no longer

read, can we say anything better of the verse of the great Doctor Johnson himself? This poem, and Dr. Dwight's historico-didactic pastoral called "Greenfield Hill," showed that Americans were feebly gaining a little in metrical skill, though originality seemed as far off as ever. Dr. Dwight, who was as modest as he was learned, fairly measured the success and the failure of himself and his fellows, by the frank motto from Pope, on the title-page of "The Conquest of Canäan:"

> "Fired, at first sight, with what the Muse imparts,
> In fearless youth we tempt the height of arts."

At this time a tendency toward the selection of American themes began to be apparent in poetry. "Greenfield Hill," despite its pretty title, and its pleasant suggestion of Sir John Denham, showed no more than moderate ability; but its subject and scenes were at least taken from the author's own Connecticut town. A great poet is both national and universal; we had no great poets, and therefore could not produce poetry of catholic interest or value; hence it was better for our bards to try to be natural and American than to be artificial and European. The patriotic jingles evoked by the Revolution were of course partially spontaneous, though but imperfectly poetic. Trumbull's "McFingal," a sort of transformed "Hudibras," in which American freedom and new-world progress took the place of Butler's Toryism, was in its way a promoter of the spirit of the Revolution,

John Trumbull, 1750–1831.

and was largely bought and read by the colonists, who were beginning to get reading-matter which they really liked, besides that which they felt that they ought to like. Some colonial follies, as well as Tory bigotries, were wholesomely chastised in the swiftly-moving, slipshod verse of "McFingal." Not even the combination of patriotism, duty, and beautiful typography could give popularity to Joel Barlow's plumbean epic, "The Columbiad," which failed as disastrously as its predecessor, "The Vision of Columbus." Barlow ascribed its failure to the fact that the Federalists controlled literary criticism, while "The Columbiad" was written by a Democrat; but Federalists did not hesitate to read and praise his widely-popular and still-read mock-heroic, "Hasty Pudding," despite some mildly disgusting passages which give more offence to the readers of our fastidious age than they did to our tough-brained great-grandfathers. On the whole, these Yale graduates were giving more help to future American literature by their semi-original excursions to Parnassus than had all the colonial manufacturers of British pentameters, though turned as neatly as some of the lines in such a poem as the weak but smoothly-written "Philosophic Solitude" (1747), by William Livingston, another Yale man, afterwards governor of New Jersey, Continental Congressman, and member of the Constitutional Convention.

Joel Barlow, 1755–1812.

The most conspicuous names in the period under discussion are those of Trumbull, Barlow,

and Freneau. Trumbull's "McFingal" and Barlow's "Hasty-Pudding" have been reprinted in our own time, and may be said to have an occasional reader. Of the early American verse these are the best-known examples. Philip Freneau is talked about, but is not read. His name is known, in a vague way, as that of "the poet of the Revolution"; and those unfamiliar with his voluminous verse are ready to believe that he was a patriot, a wit, and a successful lyrist. He was indeed a patriot, who had no words too bitter for King George the Third and his generals and ministers, but most of all for the American Tories. He liked the New England Puritans little better. Freneau wrote swiftly and carelessly on a multitude of subjects, usually without producing anyth' ery witty, satirical, or lyrical. In his time his patriotic and humorous poems were called brilliant; to us they seem "very valueless verses," to borrow the epithet applied confidently, by a living critic, to the poetical work of a famous American author of later years. Freneau must have known the difference between his good work and his doggerel rhymes, hurriedly written and instantly printed; but his public neither knew nor cared for the difference, in those troublous times of political struggle, Revolution, and nation-making. Freneau, besides his political, satirical, and descriptive poems, also essayed rattling social verse, in which he was surpassed by some of his contemporaries—for instance, by James McClurg, of Virginia, whose

Philip Freneau, 1752–1832.

"Belles of Williamsburg" celebrated the beauties of the aristocratic little capital between the York and the James.

The average excellence of Freneau's verse is small; but occasionally one finds a line, a stanza, or even a whole poem marked by imagination or by poetic thought. It is a pleasure, after the dull hymns and weak imitations produced in America during the first century and a half of colonial life, to come upon one little lyric, if no more, like Freneau's "The Wild Honey-Suckle":

Fair flower, that dost so comely grow,
  Hid in this silent, dull retreat,
Untouch'd thy honey'd blossoms blow,
  Unseen thy little branches greet:
No roving foot shall find thee here,
No busy hand provoke a tear.

By Nature's self in white array'd,
  She bade thee shun the vulgar eye,
And planted here the guardian shade,
  And sent soft waters murmuring by;
Thus quietly thy summer goes,
Thy days declining to repose.

Smit with those charms that must decay,
  I grieve to see your future doom;
They died—nor were those flowers less gay,
  The flowers that did in Eden bloom;
Unpitying frosts, and Autumn's power
Shall leave no vestige of this flower.

From morning suns and evening dews
  At first thy little being came:
If nothing once, you nothing lose,
  For when you die you are the same;

The space between is but an hour,
The frail duration of a flower.*

This is imperfect and irregular, but it is genuine. Freneau's masterpiece, which seems to me the best poem written in America before 1800, is "The House of Night, a Vision," in one hundred and thirty-six four-line stanzas, which appeared in his 1786 collection. Its occasional faults of expression and versification are manifest, but in thought and execution, notwithstanding the influence of Gray, it is surprisingly original and strong, distinctly anticipating some of the methods of Coleridge, Poe, and the English pre-Raphaelite poets, none of whom, probably, ever read a line of it. To those who enjoy a literary "find," and like to read and praise a bit of bizarre genius unknown to the multitude, I confidently commend "The House of Night." In it Death lies dying at midnight in his weird and sombre palace; doctors surround him, and a young man whose love Death has killed, forgivingly ministers to him. Then Death, having composed his own epitaph, most woefully perishes; there follows his grim burial in a grave doubly defended against the Devil, so late his trusty friend. The poem ends by pointing us toward a righteous earthly life and an unending immortality. It is not great, and not always smooth; but its lofty plot is strongly worded in

"The House of Night."

* "Poems Written between the Years 1768 and 1794, by Philip Freneau, of New Jersey. Monmouth, N. J.: Printed at the Press of the Author, at Mount Pleasant, near Middletown Point; MDCCXCV."

sometimes stately verse. I know not why Freneau, in the 1795 collection of his poems, threw away all but twenty-one stanzas, which he printed under the title of "The Vision of the Night, a Fragment." Surely none of his American predecessors or contemporaries had thought or sung, as did Freneau in this alliterative and assonant poem, of

> "The black ship travelling through the noisy gale,"
> "A mournful garden of autumnal hue,"
> "The primrose there, the violet darkly blue,"
> "The poplar tall, the lotos, and the lime,"
> "the scarlet mantled morn,"
> "a grave replete with ghosts and dreams,"

and

> "The ecstasy of woe run mad."

None but a poet could have written lines like these:

> "Trim the dull tapers, for I see no dawn;"
> "so loud and sad it played
> "As though all musick were to breathe its last."

The American mind produced a psalm-book at the beginning of the seventeenth century; at the close of the eighteenth, by a change that was gradual, not violent, it gave some promise of bringing forth that "native American drama" which has never risen into the plane of true literature. The chronicles of the stage in the United States are by no means uninteresting, but they concern the literary student even less than do the chronicles of the Eng-

The early American drama.

lish stage for the corresponding period. The wild or magnanimous Indian, the patriot of the Revolution, the society belle, the fashionable villain, the honest back-woods Yankee, and the old-time volunteer fireman of New York, have hurried through many an original play, but the results have not been for the library lamp. Not even the success of great actors in leading parts could metamorphose into literature John Howard Payne's "Brutus"; John Augustus Stone's "Metamora; or, The Last of the Wampanoags"; Robert Montgomery Bird's "The Gladiator," or Frank Murdock's "Davy Crockett." There has, on the other hand, been no lack in America of plays written, but not produced; yet the closet drama, from Thomas Godfrey's "Prince of Parthia" (written about 1759) to Longfellow's "The Spanish Student," has, in accordance with its deserts, won little more fame than the acted play. When one has named George H. Boker's "Francesca da Rimini," the American list of dramas possessing fair literary rank is nearly exhausted.

A hundred years ago, however, the prospects of the American play were relatively bright. Dwight's "Conquest of Canäan" had appeared in 1785, and had been chronicled with chastened pride in Dr. Abiel Holmes' "Annals of America" as "the first grave poem of the epic class, written by an American poet, printed in America." Two years later was presented at the John Street Theatre, New York, with similar gratulation in the Prologue, the first American play ever publicly

presented by professional actors. This was "The Contrast, a Comedy; in five acts: written by a Citizen of the United States," to wit, Royall Tyler, afterward Chief-Justice of Vermont. "The Contrast,"* its authors' first venture in literature, was certainly a better production, in its way, than "The Conquest of Canäan." If we can imagine that the same individual, in those days of Puritan hatred of the drama, happened to read the "epic" and also to hear the play, he might well have prophesied that the American manufacture of comedies would be livelier and more praiseworthy than the making of religious or patriotic epics. "The Contrast" is far from being a great comedy; it is crude and imperfect; but it is in parts bright and witty; its "stage Yankee" was the worthy prototype of a long line of similar creations; and it possesses at least one advantage over many a play of famous authorship: that of adaptability for public presentation. Much inferior, in every way, was William Dunlap's "The Father; or American Shandyism. A Comedy in five acts: written by a Citizen of New York." This play, produced in 1788, reflects the sentimentalism then rising to its highest power; the successful lover is a sort of feeble American Grandison; and the Father, the foiled villain, and the

Royall Tyler, 1758–1826.

William Dunlap, 1766–1839.

* Beautifully and accurately reprinted, under the editorship of Mr. Thomas J. McKee, as No. 1 of the publications of the Dunlap Society, New York, 1887. The second issue in this series, edited by the same competent specialist, is Dunlap's "The Father, or American Shandyism," and the fourth is Dunlap's "André."

several women, certainly avoid the danger of offending human nature by any over-accurate representation of virtues or vices. Dunlap wrote and adapted more than sixty plays; and by his books, paintings, and personal influence decidedly and wholesomely promoted the American drama and American art. Not a genius, and neither a good playwright nor a good painter, he performed a pioneer work now cordially remembered and properly honored. His failure in "André" was no worse than that of many successors in trying to make a drama out of a tempting but difficult theme.

John Howard Payne equalled Dunlap and far outstripped Tyler in the number and pretentiousness of his dramatic undertakings. The list of his tragedies, comedies, and operas, as chronicled by his enthusiastic biographer, includes more than sixty names, and cannot fail to strike with surprise all but specially-informed readers. Save "Brutus" and perhaps "Charles II.," these productions are impartially forgotten; and the name of Brutus, even, is associated in the public mind, with certain actors and not with the author. "Brutus," as materially revised by the players of its leading part, is a vigorous and dramatically-effective play, marked by an obvious strength of situation, and by something praiseworthy in the delineation of character. Were it included among the volumes of such an Elizabethan dramatist as Middleton, it would

John Howard Payne, 1792–1852.

easily and justly find occasional readers, and admirers whose enthusiasm would not be unpardonable. A Booth need not be ashamed, as an American, to repeat with his wonted grace and strength such lines by an American playwright as these which I transcribe as the best in the play:

here all are slaves
None but the fool is happy.

Tarquinia comes. Go, worship the bright sun,
And let poor Brutus wither in the shade.

Hark! the storm rides on,
The scolding winds drive through the clattering rain,
And loudly screams the haggard witch of night.

When forth you walk, may the red flaming sun
Strike you with livid plagues!
Vipers that die not slowly gnaw your heart!
May earth be to you but one wilderness!

Behold that frozen corse!
See where the lost Lucretia sleeps in death!
She was the mark and model of the time,
The mould in which each female face was formed,
The very shrine and sacristy of virtue.

If mad ambition in this guilty frame
Had strung one kingly fibre,—yea, but one,—
By all the gods, this dagger which I hold
Should rip it out, though it entwined my heart.

I am not mad, but as the lion is,
When he breaks down the toils that tyrant craft
Hath spread to catch him.

Son of Marcus Junius,
When will the tedious gods permit thy soul
To walk abroad in her own majesty,
And throw this vigor of thy madness from thee,
To avenge my father's and my brother's murder?

To the moon, folly! Vengeance, I embrace thee!

Poor youth! Thy pilgrimage is at an end!
A few sad steps have brought thee to the brink
Of that tremendous precipice whose depth
No thought of man can fathom.

I could select similar lines that fall from the mouths of other characters in the play, sometimes with an Elizabethan aptness:

Yet sometimes, when the moody fit doth take him,
He will not speak for days; yea, rather starve
Than utter nature's cravings; then, anon
He'll prattle shrewdly, with such witty folly
As almost betters reason.

I have seen
A little worthless village cur all night
Bay with incessant noise the silver moon,
While she, serene, throned in her pearléd car,
Sailed in full state along.

It is not to be forgotten, however, that Payne, with acknowledged and Elizabethan freedom, "had no hesitation in adopting the conception and language" of his seven predecessors in the same theme, and that bombast and weakness are easily to be found in his own work.

Seldom have the annals of literature proved more conclusively than in Payne's case, that the production of one heart-lyric is almost the easiest way to win a long renown. For Payne the play-

wright, actor, editor, miscellaneous poet, and obscure diplomat, the public now cares nothing; but Payne as author of one little song is enshrined in the popular heart; his body was honorably brought from his foreign death-place to rest in his native land; and needless monuments preserve the fame of him whose renown depends upon a universal knowledge of his masterpiece. "Home, Sweet Home," severed from its well-known music, and measured by strictly artistic canons, is but a poor little poem; yet it is genuine and catholic, hence it outweighs the hundreds of acts and scenes which Payne presented to the play-going public of America and England.

The "national drama" may be dismissed with the remark that when Americans produce plays of sound and original construction, of felicitous decoration, of national spirit, and of general interest, they will attain the dramatic success hitherto denied.

CHAPTER II.

THE DAWN OF IMAGINATION.

In the year 1794, just after the constitutional history of the United States had fairly begun, there appeared in New York a little volume entitled "The Columbian Muse: a Selection of American Poetry, from various Authors of Established Reputation." The muse was more Columbian than poetic; and the authors' reputations do not now appear so firmly "established" as they were thought to be a century ago. The book sampled the work of Livingston, Freneau, Dwight, Trumbull, Barlow, Dunlap, and others even more obscure. In one sense it was a sufficiently discouraging sign, but it showed that poetic industry had appeared, though genius was lacking. Imagination had not characterized our theological treatises, though some of them proved, at least, their right to be called visionary and evanescent; nor had it marked our political speeches and public documents, notwithstanding an occasional eloquent apostrophe, or clear vision of the future results of a noble theory. The dawn of true literature, however, was not long to delay; in prose the work of Irving was about to interest readers in two nations, and in verse we were to have something better than mechanical

pentameters or painfully artificial rhymes. The "rosy fingers" of this long-expected dawn were first to brighten the skies above the Hudson, not those which hung above the more melancholy waters of Massachusetts Bay; and the legendary land of Rip van Winkle was to be visited by a poet who found his theme in fairy-land, not in Columbia nor in Canäan.

Joseph Rodman Drake, 1795–1820.

"The Culprit Fay," by Joseph Rodman Drake, appeared in 1819, when the author was twenty-four years old; it was the outgrowth of a conversation between Drake, Halleck, and Cooper concerning the unsung poetry of American rivers. Its little story of a sinning fay's contrition, confession, and satisfaction is told in a way that charmed my early boyhood and pleases still; for it shows that American verse, under Drake's hand, had emerged from pious propriety into the realm of fancy and the borderland of imagination. Drake wrote swiftly, and deemed his poems valueless and only worthy of the fire; but one finds something savable in lines like these:

The stars are on the moving stream,
  And fling, as its ripples gently flow,
A burnished length of wavy beam
  In an eel-like, spiral line below;

The winds are whist, and the owl is still,
  The bat in the shelvy rock is hid,
And naught is heard on the lonely hill
But the cricket's chirp, and the answer shrill
  Of the gauze-winged katydid,

And the plaint of the wailing whippoorwill,
  Who mourns unseen, and ceaseless sings
Ever a note of wail and woe,
  Till morning spreads her rosy wings,
And earth and sky in her glances glow.

'Tis the hour of fairy ban and spell:
The wood-tick has kept the minutes well;
He has counted them all with click and stroke,
Deep in the heart of the mountain oak,
And he has awakened the sentry elve
  Who sleeps with him in the haunted tree,
To bid him ring the hour of twelve,
  And call the fays to their revelry;
Twelve small strokes on his tinkling bell—
('Twas made of the white snail's pearly shell)—
"Midnight comes, and all is well!
Hither, hither wing your way!
'Tis the dawn of the fairy day."
They come from beds of lichen green,
They creep from the mullein's velvet screen;
Some on the backs of beetles fly
  From the silver tops of moon-touched trees,
Where they swung in their cobweb hammocks high,
  And rocked about in the evening breeze;
Some from the hum-bird's downy nest—
  They had driven him out by elfin power,
And pillowed on plumes of his rainbow breast,
  Had slumbered there till the charméd hour;
Some had lain in the scoop of the rock,
  With glittering ising-stars inlaid;
And some had opened the four-o'clock,
  And stole within its purple shade.
  And now they throng the moonlight glade,
Above—below—on every side,
  Their little minim forms arrayed
In the tricksy pomp of fairy pride.

Drake's services to nascent American poetry also included the composition of a spirited lyric to "The American Flag," familiar in the anthologies, and long a favorite with the school-boys of the nation. Its tropes are somewhat strained, and its sensational scheme narrowly escapes bombast; but on the whole—like a greater poem, Shelley's "Cloud"—it avoids the bathetic and produces an honest and stirring effect upon the reader. The "azure robe of night," "stars of glory," "gorgeous dyes," "milky baldric," "lightning-lances," "thunder-drum of heaven," "gory sabres," "shoots of flame," and "meteor-glances" of Drake's poem are parts of a symmetrical whole and are accompanied by expressions of true thought. The lyric, in its entirety, easily surpasses such bald, rude rhymes as Robert Treat Paine, Jr.'s, "Adams and Liberty," Joseph Hopkinson's "Hail Columbia," or Francis Scott Key's "Star-Spangled Banner." These last-named songs, like "Yankee Doodle" itself, are so inseparably connected with certain airs, and so closely enshrined in the patriotic heart, that no one stops to think of their literary poverty. The young American nation had found no such singers as those who voiced the stirring hopes of Germany in the days of Napoleon's attempted abduction and murder of a continent.

Fitz-Greene Halleck, 1790–1867.

When young Drake died, his friend Halleck put his deep and unaffected grief into that tender poem of which four lines are universally known :

Green be the turf above thee,
Friend of my better days;
None knew thee but to love thee,
Nor named thee but to praise.

Drake and Halleck worked together as friends and fellow-lovers of poetry. With much that was perishable or valueless, in which division their humorous verse must be included, they produced some things that have attained what may fairly be called a lasting renown, though not the highest. Drake's "American Flag" and Halleck's "Marco Bozzaris" were read, and memorized, and printed in the collections, because people liked them and were stirred by their patriotism or pathos. Limited in range and modest in achievement, American poetry had reached a time when its principal productions could take care of themselves. A "poem" that depends for readers merely upon its piety, or its patriotism, or its local color, is sure to be forgotten soon. Halleck was as patriotic as Barlow, and as fond of local themes as Dwight; but he possessed what both Barlow and Dwight lacked: a spark of poetic fire. There was a genuine force in his lament for Drake and his stirring lyric about Marco Bozzaris the Greek. Halleck, in the foolish days of American criticism, used to be mentioned most respectfully as one of our greater bards. This he certainly was not; but his work marked a step in advance toward that literary self-reliance which was at first so painfully lacking in the United states. Halleck, at least, felt the difference between imagination and raw

ambition, and this difference he was able to make apparent to his readers, though they did not stop to indulge in close critical analysis.

Elsewhere, along the Atlantic coast, appeared signs of the new day which was lending distinction to the poets of the Hudson. Washington Allston and Richard Henry Dana, on the banks of that river Charles which was to be made famous by Longfellow, were giving to Massachusetts some welcome tokens of future achievement. Allston, one of the pioneers of American art, was a man of fine thought and poetic feeling, which sometimes found expression in verse or fiction. He had lived and studied in Europe; the pictures of the masters were his models; and his list of personal friends included famous names. Early transcendentalism, in the form of spiritual receptivity and insight, was beginning to affect England and America; and Allston shared with Coleridge the powerful effect of the new movement. Like other young Americans, he brought home with him somewhat of that nameless potency, that attitude toward life, which we call culture; and culture was the very thing the young nation had most lacked. Allston's poems and little romance are forgotten, but his biblical pictures, because of their form and color, will retain some absolute as well as relative fame. Dana, in his long life, beheld the rise of American poetry from humble imitations to the manly triumphs of a free imagination; and in its early years he aided its progress, and

Richard Henry Dana, 1787–1879.

the development of culture. While Allston was painting and lecturing on art, Dana was expounding Shakespeare to audiences more interested than critical. Dana was one of the Americans who made unsuccessful attempts to domesticate the discursive periodical-miscellany of the Addisonian type; but his editorship of the most famous Boston quarterly still further aided in the spread of knowledge and gracious letters. When his long and once-known poem, "The Buccaneer," was re-issued in a magazine, a few years ago, some critics thought it a new production, so completely had it passed into the shadows. Its metrical evenness and its smoothly-turned descriptive phrases approached, but quite missed, the success won by Bryant. Dana, like Charles Sprague, is one of the bygone figures in our literature, whose relative importance must constantly diminish; but those venerable Bostonians, when they passed to rest, could feel that they had in some small degree prepared the way, by their creations and their criticisms, for their stronger successors.

When one has patiently read the eight hundred pages containing the "poetical works" of Percival, the chief of the Connecticut bards of the second generation, it is difficult to pay him even the relative praise that belongs to a pioneer. Percival repeatedly crosses, in the wrong direction, the line that separates the sublime from the ridiculous, the soulful from the sentimental. The age of sickly sweet sentimentality had come upon America, and Per-

James Gates Percival, 1795–1856.

cival too often yielded entirely to its influence, instead of accepting that influence in part, that he might turn it to higher service. He could find, like Bryant, a poetic theme in "Consumption," and could write upon it eighty-two lines beginning:

> There is a sweetness in woman's decay,
> When the light of beauty is fading away, etc.;

and he everywhere hunted up themes for so-called "reflective" verse. The reflective idea is also favored by that index of first lines which makes his works seem somewhat painfully decorous and monotonously unreadable; but the variety of subject is surely sufficiently great. Imitating half a dozen of the greater English poets of his time, Percival found themes in sky, earth, and water, in ancient history and in modern episode. He ranged from "Retrospection" to "Genius Waking"; from "Midnight Music" to "Perry's Victory on Lake Erie"; from the Violet or the Gentiana Crinita to the Good Man:—

> How happy is the pure, good man, whose life
> Was always good, who in the tender years
> Of childhood, and the trying time of youth,
> Was shielded by a kind, parental hand!

who rises with the lark and secretly prays in blank verse for five pages.

But the voluminous Percival gives evidence of the fact that the American mind, in his day, was beginning to have vague and imperfect, but not

insincere, poetic thoughts and hopes; that its verse-product was received with some favor by a widening audience; and that its themes were sometimes taken from nature or from human nature, and treated with a pen that was facile, if too fluent. If we had never produced more than a Percival, there had never been an American literature; but a new land needs many a little builder before its cathedrals rise in the world's view.

Looking back upon Percival's works, the best thing I find is an occasional apt choice and treatment of a subject taken from external nature, not human nature. Percival sang of Seneca Lake:

> On thy fair bosom, silver lake!
> The wild swan spreads his snowy sail,
> And round his breast the ripples break,
> As down he bears before the gale. . . . .
>
> How sweet at set of sun to view
> Thy golden mirror spreading wide,
> And see the mist of mantling blue
> Float round the distant mountain's side. . . . .
>
> On thy fair bosom, silver lake!
> O, I could ever sweep the oar,
> When early birds at morning wake,
> And evening tells us toil is o'er.

John Gardiner Calkins Brainard, 1795–1828.

Another crude Connecticut poet, J. G. C. Brainard, was writing hasty lines similarly lacking in greatness but similarly marked by occasional genuineness. Now the sea-bird was his theme:

Who hovers on high o'er the lover,
And her who has clung to his neck?
Whose wing is the wing that can cover
With its shadow the foundering wreck?
'Tis the sea-bird, sea-bird, sea-bird,
Lone looker on despair;
The sea-bird, sea-bird, sea-bird,
The only witness there.

Again, he wrote of some local stream, or of the autumn woods he well knew:

The dead leaves strew the forest walk,
And withered are the pale, wild flowers;
The frost hangs black'ning on the stalk,
The dew-drops fall in frozen showers.
Gone are the Spring's green sprouting bowers,
Gone Summer's rich and mantling vines,
And Autumn, with her yellow hours,
On hill and plain no longer shines.

Less true and more bombastic was Brainard's once famous extemporization on Niagara, which he never saw. Essentially valueless are such meditations as these, worded in feeble blank verse:

It would seem
As if God poured thee from his hollow hand;
Had hung his bow upon thy awful front;
Had spoke in that loud voice which seemed to him
Who dwelt in Patmos for his Saviour's sake,
The sound of many waters: and had bade
Thy flood to chronicle the ages back,
And notch his centuries in the eternal rocks.
Deep calleth unto deep. And what are we,
That hear the question of that voice sublime?
Oh what are all the notes that ever rang

From war's vain trumpet by thy thundering side?
Yea, what is all the riot man can make,
In his short life, to thy unceasing roar?
And yet, bold babbler! what art thou to Him
Who drowned a world, and heaped the waters far
Above its loftiest mountains?—A light wave
That breaks and whispers of its maker's might!

The lyrical spirit, with its love of nature and of emotion, swiftly expressed, was stealing in upon the South as well as the North. From the South was to come our most distinctly lyrical poet, Poe; and there already was Richard Henry Wilde, Irishman, congressman, and man of culture. We have forgotten his long poem, "Hesperia," but remember these "Stanzas"—everybody wrote "stanzas," in those days, unless, indeed, he wrote a "Conquest of Canäan," a "Columbiad," or a "Hadad":

Richard Henry Wilde, 1789-1847.

My life is like the summer rose
That opens to the morning sky,
But ere the shades of evening close
Is scattered on the ground—to die!
Yet on the rose's humble bed
The sweetest dews of night are shed,
As if she wept the waste to see—
But none shall weep a tear for me!

My life is like the autumn leaf
That trembles in the moon's pale ray;
Its hold is frail, its date is brief,
Restless—and soon to pass away!
Yet ere that leaf shall fall and fade
The parent tree will mourn its shade,
The winds bewail the leafless tree—
But none shall breathe a sigh for me!

My life is like the prints which feet
  Have left on Tampa's desert strand;
Soon as the rising tide shall beat,
  All trace will vanish from the sand;
Yet, as if grieving to efface
All vestige of the human race,
On that lone shore loud moans the sea—
But none, alas! shall mourn for me!

The feeble twitterings of the American songsters were beginning to be heard beyond the ocean. Byron, whose praise depended on fancy rather than reason, was good enough to commend the lyric just cited, which was fairly representative of the minor poetry beginning to appear in one section of the new world; while the good-natured Southey, fond of poetical bombast, bestowed upon Mrs. Maria Gowen Brooks laudations fit for Sappho or Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Mrs. Brooks represented sentimentalism at the full; she was called by the name of "Maria del'Occidente;" and in "Zophiel; or, The Bride of Seven," she successfully transferred to America many of the weakest elements in the English romanticism of 1825. In her verse, zephyrs play with ringlets, lips resemble bud-bursting flowers, eyebrows have flexile arches, cheeks are vermilion and feet silvery; the turf is velvet, the noon fervid, the midnight peaceful; the dove responds to love, and lutes reëcho flutes. But all things go to prepare the way for a nation's literature; "Zophiel" is at least better, as well as later, than the "Magnalia Christi Americana."

Maria (Gowen) Brooks, 1795–1845.

By this time, however, the day of small things in American poetry had passed, and the country could boast one poet relatively, though not absolutely, of the first rank, and deserving notice and praise even by absolute standards. The work of William Cullen Bryant is not to be measured as a curiosity, like that of Anne Bradstreet, or a well-meaning attempt, like that of Joel Barlow, or a promise, like that of Drake. Neither does his place in literature depend upon a meritorious lyric or two, such as Halleck's "Marco Bozzaris" or Wilde's "My Life is Like a Summer Rose." It is true that Bryant wrote short poems, not epics, dramas, or idyls; and that his name is closely connected with three or four productions of special fame and merit. But we feel, in reading his verse, that its successes are not due to accident. It comes from the brain of a strong man, in full possession of his powers. It is the product of a thinker and of an artist; it represents both imagination and art; and its themes are taken from nature and the soul. Bryant, as has been said, cannot justly be ranked with poets of the first class. Neither in range nor in excellence of achievement is his verse of the highest. Yet his thoughts are deep, manly, and true; his observation of skies, woods, and waters, and his power of description of the external world, justly entitle him to his wide renown as a "poet of nature." He has been amiably called our American Wordsworth, but he was no copyist. He never gave us poetry as

William Cullen Bryant. 1794–1878.

great or apt as Wordsworth's best; but he did not sink to Wordworth's flatness, nor wander away to the fools' region of Wordsworth's silliness. Nay more, he interprets the meaning of nature, as the mirror and teacher of the soul. That which reflection must dwell upon, and that which art may portray, in life and its surroundings, Bryant worthily represents, in forms not a few. All that is lacking in his writing is the force and fire of genius. It represents meditation and expression almost at their best; but it belongs not with the work of the greater choir.

It seems proper, therefore, to close this chapter, on the dawn of imagination in America, with the name of Bryant. By the length and importance of his life-work; by his early triumphs, middle-life successes, and octogenarian achievements, he left to us a remarkably complete and valuable literary legacy, enriched, perforce, by a personal character of serenity and strength, albeit of a certain coldness. Bryant's poems are by no means lacking in the quality of imagination; but his imagination does not soar and sing in distant and ultimate skies. Within his limits he need not have done better: let not his successors complain of the comparatively narrow tract on Parnassus on which he dwelt. As Franklin was the first man to make the American mind felt as a force in other lands than ours; as Irving was our pioneer in carrying forth a distinct literary message and achievement; so Bryant was the first poet to give us verse that needed no adventitious excuse or

recommendation. When "Thanatopsis" appeared in *The North American Review*, in 1817, true poetry had come to, and had come from, America. Its author was but twenty-three years of age, but he had been spinning rhymes, or making verse, for more than half of his short lifetime. At ten he was a contributor to the country newspapers, and at fourteen a political satirist in metre. It would seem that the poetic spirit could not longer keep silent in the United States.

"Thanatopsis."

"Thanatopsis" is a Saxon and New England poem. Its view of death reflects the race characteristics of ten centuries. It shows "no trace of age, no fear to die." Its morality and its trust are ethnic rather than Christian. It nowhere expresses that belief in personal immortality which the author possessed and elsewhere stated. It is a piece of verse of which any language or age might be proud. Yet, as I have just said, this strong and serene utterance of philosophy and of poetry, expressed in the best blank verse of the period, came from a mere boy, who but a few years before had been writing political poems, dashed with fire and vitriol, on "The Embargo" and "The Spanish Revolution." In its earliest publication "Thanatopsis" was much less than perfect, and was manifestly inferior to the final version. But even then it was, as it is now, a microcosm of the author's mind and powers. It includes the thought of "The Ages," read by young Bryant to the Harvard Phi Beta Kappa

Society in 1821; and its mood is not dissimilar to that of "The Flood of Years," which was the fruit of the author's musings in old age. That essential stability of mind of which this early and most favored poem gave witness, never forsook the poet, though of course his choice and art were fallible. Whether he was traveller, story-teller, essayist, biographical orator, political editor, or free-trade reformer, he carried into the varied work of life the solemn and cheering lessons derived from the contemplation of a universe at once majestic and ever-changing.

The results of Bryant's labors, as a man and an author, might easily have been forecast from the evident character of his mind and poetic product.

Bryant's Poetic Product.

The author of "Thanatopsis" could not be a voluminous versifier. He must write comparatively little, and chiefly on themes suggested by nature or by the reflective temper. The residuum of his work is therefore valuable, since his power to treat such themes could not be questioned, after his first success, and since it remained with him to the end. English poetry, after its freshness in the work of Chaucer and of a few lyrists of later periods, had painfully lacked the spontaneousness and beauty of out-door nature. In the eighteenth century its see-saw artificiality had been deplorable. Cowper had prepared the way for Wordsworth and his fellows; and the romantic revival in England, and even in Germany, was arousing the American versifiers. So far as this revival

was characterized by a willingness to regard nature as the friend and fellow and mentor of man, Bryant was its principal American representative. He forgot not that the poetry of nature, when transferred to the printed page, must be open and free, and accordingly he was not a mere maker of words and metres in the library. But nature, in Bryant's view, had something to say as well as to show; and the lesson as well as the vision of nature is presented in "A Forest Hymn," "To a Waterfowl," "Monument Mountain," "The Death of the Flowers." The many songs of sky, forest, brook, meadow, and field-path are reëchoed by Bryant only in part. His pages do not resound with the "thousand voices" wherewith "earth worships God." But when we do catch the solemn tone of the "earth-song," in Bryant's lines, we feel no sense of unworthiness. The grandeur may be limited and imperfect, but it is still grandeur. Wayward beauty or tender suggestiveness is not absent, but each is subordinated to the solemn reflections inspired by the scenes in which we live. Some curious students have averred that the key of nature—the resultant of all the voices of the world—is A. This deep undertone is that which Bryant heard, and to which his verse-music responds in fit accord.

It is not necessarily an arraignment of a man of genius to declare that he did not and could not do this or that thing. That Bryant was

unable to produce an epic, a drama, a strong delineation of the heroic character, a brilliant lyric of patriotism or passion, a poem instinct with daring imagination, was not necessarily to the discredit of his powers. *Non omnia possumus omnes.* His place was with Gray, not with Milton, Goethe, Browning, or Burns. Intense power was not his, nor broad creative range, nor soaring vision; his marks were thoughtfulness and serenity. But poets of the second order are not so much to be blamed for their deficiencies as measured by their successes within their proper field. Bryant's were apparent, even absolutely, if we do not press the term too far; relatively, as has been seen, they were for a time even commanding. By and by he must yield to Emerson the poetic seer, to Longfellow the catholic singer of sympathy and of art, to Poe the lyrist pure and simple. Bryant's voice sounded out less strong than Whittier's, in distinctly American song; and even as a descriptive poet Whittier, in his artlessness and haste, seemed truer to our local life than Bryant, in his reserve and quiet strength. What Bryant did and was has been neatly summarized in the phrase "narrow greatness,"—only one prefers to think of the greatness rather than the narrowness. There are no mute inglorious Miltons in the field of letters; everyone gets his due; Bryant has exactly received his deserved meed. His limited greatness is made apparent by his loneliness; there is but one Bryant. After all,

whether a poet be great or not great, his place is his own if we think of his work as being sufficient in itself; such, indeed, is the work of the author of "Thanatopsis."

The chief of our poets of meditation, based upon observation, are Bryant and Emerson, if we set aside Longfellow for the moment; since his poetry, though often reflective, is more often marked by feeling and sentiment than meditation. Between the prevalent attitude of Bryant and that of Emerson is this difference. Bryant's is that of solemn acceptance of the existent order, Emerson's that of optimistic faith in that order. Bryant as surely avoids the effect of gloom as Emerson avoids that of gayety. When Bryant was more than eighty years of age, in the very year of his death, he wrote of Washington:

Bryant's Solemnity.

Lo, where, beneath an icy shield,
Calmly the mighty Hudson flows!
By snow-clad fell and frozen field,
Broadening, the lordly river goes.

The wildest storm that sweeps through space,
And rends the oak with sudden force,
Can raise no ripple on his face,
Or slacken his majestic course.

Thus, mid the wreck of thrones, shall live,
Unmarred, undimmed, our hero's fame,
And years succeeding years shall give
Increase of honors to his name.

There was something in Bryant's mind that was akin to Washington's; this steady flow of thought

and purpose, beneath a calm exterior, untossed by storm or passion, marks Bryant's poetical work from the first. When he forgets himself, and essays the playful or humorous, the result is melancholy indeed, as in that fearful poem on the mosquito. In general he is the singer of

> "The victory of endurance born;"
> "The eternal years of God;"
> "Old ocean's gray and melancholy waste;"

hills "rock-ribbed, and ancient as the sun;" and an "unfaltering trust" learned in the groves, "God's first temples," or from nature's teachings under the open sky.

Bryant's Uniformity of Work.

Bryant resembles Emerson in the characteristic of uniformity. His poetry is little affected by the progress of the author's life, or the changes and events of the national history. The stale Minerva-comparison is applicable to the early products of this author's mind. If we except the political verse of his boyhood, we find little to suggest either youth or age. His occasional poems are not felicitous, as a rule. "The Death of Lincoln" is a wooden thing, and "The Death of Slavery" is lacking in the fire of Whittier and the art of Longfellow. One of his distinctly autobiographic pieces, "A Lifetime," is poorer still; it carries us back to the dreary days of colonial doggerel:

> She leads by the hand their first-born,
> A fair-haired little one,
> And their eyes as they meet him sparkle
> Like brooks in the morning sun.

Another change, and I see him
  Where the city's ceaseless coil
Sends up a mighty murmur
  From a thousand modes of toil.

And there, mid the clash of presses,
  He plies the rapid pen
In the battles of opinion,
  That divide the sons of men, etc.

There are one-hundred and forty-eight lines of this general kind, whether better or worse, written in old age by a true poet, who had not lost his powers, but who never seemed able to discriminate with certainty between good and bad. What Bryant could do, he could do in youth as well as in maturity; what he could not do in youth, he never learned.

The use of one of his youthful powers, that of story-telling, was given up in later years. With Robert C. Sands and Gulian C. Verplanck he edited for three years (1828–1830) an annual entitled "The Talisman," which in a modest way marked a period in American literary culture. "The Talisman" for 1829, for instance, was a handsome volume, well printed on what would nowadays be called ragged-edged hand-made paper, nicely bound in half leather, gilt top, and illustrated with ambitious but rather feeble steel-engravings of American origin. In its outward form the book was an exact prototype of some of the finer publications of our own day (for there has been no improvement in the art of printing for two centuries);

Bryant's Prose.

and, better still, it had in its contents an unquestionable tone of literary culture and power. For this second volume Bryant wrote, in prose, "Recollections of the South of Spain," and a "Story of the Island of Cuba," and also, with Verplanck, some "Reminiscences of New York." Here, as elsewhere, we see how crudeness and self-assertion were yielding to refinement and conscious strength, which indubitably marked these early though essentially unimportant writings of Bryant. His prose work, throughout life, remained in relative obscurity; but his letters of travel, orations commemorative of friends and contemporaries; critical introductions to collections of poetry, of books, of pictures, or historical narrative; newspaper editorials, etc., possessed the negative merit of freedom from haste or extravagance, and the positive qualities of smoothness, accuracy, and good sense. This well-known and successful poet, like so many other American workers in various fields, never shirked the miscellaneous, though ephemeral and unimportant, duties resting upon authors who are creating and developing a new national literature. His position as the literary and civic Nestor of New York society, during many years, rather increased the number of his transitory tasks, and encroached upon the already impaired time devoted to his high and original work. This, however, is a personal, not a literary, matter; we measure literature by achievement only, not by causes or conditions, however they may affect achievement.

Yet Bryant's city life and manifold duties never injuriously affected the quality of his nature-poetry. Born in the country, he was a country resident for a large part of the year. A poet of observation and reflection, his records of sight and insight were most frequent when he was surrounded by congenial scenes, that is, in rural life. Not a lyrist, not a poet of sentiment, not powerfully affected by reading, he was not often tempted to turn aside from his chosen woodland path. The young Longfellow began in a similar line, but was soon attracted by a thousand themes of love, ambition, sentiment, European romance and culture, and American history and tradition,—as Bryant never was. All these themes Bryant touches, but in his central self he is the contemplative interpreter of nature, and of the procession of man through the ages, environed by the eternal hills and the ever variant sea. It is not strange that a poetic mind so austere, solemn, and essentially unchanged as Bryant's, should have served as a model for a few not successful imitators, who could reproduce neither the man nor his verse. Artificial meditation in verse is like an artificial temple, never devoted to the service of the gods. Bryant himself, on the whole, measured his powers and his limitations justly, gave us the utmost results within his reach as poet, and attained in middle life his full due of praise; for, as has been said, his deserts were clearly perceived and amply rewarded.

The place of Bryant in American poetry, then,

differs materially from his place in American prose. In the former he was a pioneer in fact, but not in the character or quality of his work, which was practically independent of its time. In the latter he was a pioneer in every sense, doing what he could to further culture, learning, good manners, and sound politics in a new land; and employing powers always respectable, but never commanding, in whatsoever task might present itself with adequate claim. Even in prose, however, it is doubtful whether any reserved possibilities of higher achievement, under more favorable circumstances, lay within him.

To return finally to his poetry, upon which his ultimate renown must wholly rest, we note that the principal qualities of that poetry did not depend upon time-conditions. The dawn of American poetry attained its sunrise-light in Bryant; but his verse, if now presented for the first time, would probably achieve almost precisely the kind and amount of success it attained six or seven decades ago. Its meritorious quality is essential and not accidental or occasional. It is not of the greatest, for it is not highly imaginative, not broadly constructive, not enthusiastic for liberty, not strikingly original, not beautifully musical, not bathed in the ever-changing light of the ideal toward which the noblest poets yearningly peer; but it is often grave, reverend, profound, highly helpful. Save Emerson, no American poet so

Bryant independent of time-conditions.

often and so well described the Nature familiar to the residents of the Eastern States, the Nature which has been the background of most of our literature. Bryant might have said, with Addison: "Poetic fields encompass me around"; and, from them, in many a verse and measure, he drew the lesson of serene obedience to the Power behind Nature:

> Be it ours to meditate,
> In these calm shades, thy milder majesty,
> And to the beautiful order of thy works
> Learn to conform the order of our lives.

In the provincial days of our literature, a possible Shakespeare or Milton was thought to be hidden in some village poetaster, while incipient Byrons and fully-equipped Thomsons were plenty enough. Born in those early days, when pretentious mediocrity was "hailed" and honored, Bryant lived until after the close of the first great literary period of America, and preserved the dignity and value of his verse to the end of his career. No American, as yet, has written better blank verse, and none, in hymns or other sober lyrics, has more effectually expressed his thought in iambic tetrameter four-line stanzas, with alternately rhyming lines, or rhyming couplets. No American, furthermore, has made a worthier contribution to the accumulating literature of Homeric translation. Bryant's stately versions of the Iliad and Odyssey, in blank verse, have already endured without detriment the

discussions and rivalries of twenty years. With a part of Homer's genius—his grandeur—

Bryant's Homer.

Bryant was in fit and sympathetic accord, and his plainly straightforward and steadily dignified verse interprets many parts of the Iliad and Odyssey in a way not inadequate. Homer is the great problem of translation; no one reproduces all his qualities. One translator offers fire and swiftness at the expense of stateliness; another, stateliness that is stiff and pompous, and therefore un-Homeric. A regular and strong rendition of Homer's stories and thoughts, with a part of the Homeric manner—these Bryant gives us. His version seems a good one until we turn to the magnificent Greek itself, when it vanishes with all other Homeric translations. But a history of national literature must not stop to discuss renditions from other literatures.

The career of William Cullen Bryant was a peculiarly fortunate one. To few men does life give more of fulfilled hope and achieved promise. In his literary work he early took a just measure of his powers, and by the exercise of those powers won a success which, though not the greatest or broadest, was evident and long-lasting. Not many bards could so confidently say (if I may reverently use the quotation): what I have written, I have written. Not many have given us, so quietly and so strongly, the best that lay in their minds, leaving their rank in literature to be settled by inexorable Time, without distress or reckless ambition on

Bryant's Career.

their own part. Bryant avoided the mistakes of over-confidence, and yet did not fall into the weakness of undue literary conservatism. This honorable and excellent poet, as he looked forward without envy to the brighter days of American literature, might have given an affirmative answer to the query concerning a broader immortality, with which he closed his poem on "The Return of Youth:"

Hast thou not glimpses, in the twilight here,
  Of mountains where immortal morn prevails?
Comes there not, through the silence, to thine ear
  A gentle rustling of the morning gales;
A murmur, wafted from that glorious shore,
  Of streams that water banks forever fair,
And voices of the loved ones gone before,
  More musical in that celestial air?

CHAPTER III.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

FOR many years the most representative name in American poetry has been that of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Others have often rivalled or surpassed him in special successes, or in peculiar fields. The poetry of Emerson displays a clearness of vision, a loftiness of plan, an optimistic philosophy, and a profundity of thought to which Longfellow cannot wholly attain; but it is the splendid poetry of fragment and of swift utterance. Poe's peculiar domain Longfellow neither would enter nor could enter with success. In some few respects Lowell displays powers—and not alone of wit—more significant than those of his friend and neighbor and collegiate predecessor. Such reflections as these, however, cannot profitably be followed far. All in all, Longfellow has been the nation's poet, and has been recognized as such in the other great Teutonic countries as well as in America. From him came the only important poem embodying the myths and imaginative life of the Indian race,—a poem which, alone among all our productions, shows something of the epic spirit, in that it is a characteristic verse-story of the hero of a race and

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1807–1882.

time, whose deeds are affected by the courage of man and by the supernatural work of the powers above. From Longfellow, too, came other tales or dramas of by-gone American life and scenery, in New England or in Nova Scotia. "The Courtship of Miles Standish," "Evangeline," and "The New England Tragedies" were distinctly local products, while at least one of them possessed that universal interest which is a mark of true literary achievement. Longfellow, more than any other American, made known to a provincial people the wealth and the charm of continental culture, and of German romanticism in particular. He experimented so successfully with two measures unfamiliar in English—unrhymed hexameter and unrhymed trochaic tetrameter—that in their use he has virtually had neither rivals nor successors. Furthermore, he has been deemed, by thousands, preëminently the poet of sympathy and sentiment, the laureate of the common human heart; yet none has been able to class him with the slender sentimentalists, or to deny to him the possession of artistic powers of somewhat unusual range and of unquestionable effectiveness. Longfellow has aroused affection on the one hand and stimulated criticism on the other; the personality has hardly been forgotten in the product, and yet the work has made no claims not intrinsic. Like Whittier, Longfellow is beloved; like Emerson, he is honored for his poetic evangel; and like Poe, he is studied as an artist in words and metrical effects.

His position as leader of the American choir, however, has not been unquestioned, and is not likely to escape sharp challenge in future. Forty years ago, Poe, with all the energy he could exert, brought against the greater part of Longfellow's shorter poems the charge of prevalent didacticism, followed by the poet at the expense of beauty. The longer productions upon which his fame must largely rest had not then been written; but the same criticism has since been made more than once, in various forms, and will continue to be made. It is sometimes broadened to the claim that Longfellow's work is good but not great, pleasing but not imaginative, and hence of temporary rather than ultimate value.

The questioned Leader of American Song.

The real worth of Longfellow's writings is likely to be made apparent by a frank abandonment of that which is transient or faulty. The great service which he did to American culture and poetic thought, has been fully stated in a previous part of this history.* We have seen that he studied widely and sympathetically, and that he taught his countrymen well. In two important colleges he served as instructor for many a year, in that drudgery which is so constantly brightened by the responsive work of the more diligent or appreciative students. Graduates from Bowdoin and Harvard bore his message into Philistia, but Longfellow likewise directly educated the general public in

His Transient Work.

* Vol. I., pp. 397–402.

many and sometimes humble ways. He wrote or edited text-books in French, Spanish, and Italian; he prepared numerous translations, long or short, from nearly all the Continental tongues; he edited a huge anthology of European verses, and compiled one or two little books of selections from English bards; he portrayed, in gently-romantic essays, the life and scenes of the Old World of castles and cathedrals, sunny France, decadent Spain, and Italy swarming with ghosts of past greatness; he opened the oaken door to the then unknown halls of Anglo-Saxon letters; and even in his last years he took the trouble to edit thirty-one trig volumes of the "Poems of Places," from his native Maine to the far islands of Oceanica. All this ephemeral work—in which I do not include the translation of the "Divine Comedy"—was of decided benefit to the country, and far from valueless to the doer himself; but it may be dismissed at once as we turn to the estimate of the character and value of Longfellow's poetry. It helped to develop American culture, but did not greatly benefit American verse.

Not much greater worth or permanence distinguishes Longfellow's essays in fiction. During all his life he had a certain fondness for excursions and experiments. Only two years after the publication of "Evangeline," his first successful and widely popular poem of length, appeared "Kavanagh, a Tale." The brief story is pleasing throughout; its rural pictures have a mild idyllic grace, and its gentle humor approves itself to the reader, who heartily accepts

"Kavanagh, a Tale."

its lesson: that purpose should be transmuted into action. All that could possibly be said in its favor was thus worded by Emerson in a letter to its author: "It is good painting, and I think it the best sketch we have seen in the direction of the American novel. One thing struck me as I read,—that you win our gratitude too easily; for after our much experience of the squalor of New Hampshire and the pallor of Unitarianism, we are so charmed with elegance in an American book that we could forgive more vices than are possible to you." The same friendly critic also said that he read the book "with great contentment," and found that "it had, with all its gifts and graces, the property of persuasion, and of inducing the serene mood it required." But it soon joined the great company of sketches toward the American Novel. This amiable story is respectably included in the complete prose-works of its author, of whom it was not unworthy, but whose reputation it never enhanced. Produced when Longfellow was forty-two, in length and merit it fairly equals Hawthorne's "Fanshawe," published when Hawthorne was twenty-four. "Kavanagh" leaves upon the mind an impression of limitation rather than of imperfection, but its minor graces are all it can boast.

"Hyperion, a Romance."

"Hyperion, a Romance" is decidedly more important than "Kavanagh," which it antedated by ten years. It is longer, its imaginative element is broader and more conspicuous, its creative power is higher, its style is superior, and it is of significance for the light

which it throws upon the author's mind, and upon the romantic movement of the time, which Longfellow was turning from Germany to the United States, then in the sweet enjoyment of a period of musky sentimentalism. The autobiographical element in "Hyperion" is unmistakable, though not to be hunted into its fastnesses. We have in these pages the record of some of the foreign travels, experiences, and musings of a thoughtful mind, touched with the gentle but irresistible lessons of an old land of romance and tender passion. The view of life here presented is optimistic, yet overhung with a purple melancholy, and affected by that feeling of sadness, not akin to pain, of which Longfellow elsewhere sings in a well-known poem. We have in this world—the book seems to remind us—the lessons of the past, the wealth of the present, and the hope of the future. Life is a rich possession, in which joy and pathos are fitly blent, and in which pure love sanctifies manly duty. "Hyperion" bore to the American public a needed message at the proper time. The sentimentality of many readers was then both sickly and silly, but Longfellow gave them a romance sufficiently meditative and unrealistic to be satisfactory at that weak period, and yet so true and so brave that it spoke of aspiration as well as of reflection and "feeling." "Hyperion" was intelligible to the feebler minds of the day, and yet not unwelcome to the stronger. It was "Wilhelm Meister" wholly restated and fitted for a Saxon audience in

America. With the freshness of a young heart, beating more quickly in the presence of the glories of an Old World still comparatively unfamiliar, the Paul Flemming of "Hyperion" taught many a sympathetic soul to heed the lesson of the quaint mortuary inscription which forms the motto of the book: "Look not mournfully into the Past. It comes not back again. Wisely improve the Present. It is thine. Go forth to meet the shadowy Future, without fear, and with a manly heart." This agreeable love-tale, with its pleasant English and its poetic pictures of life and landscape, will be enveloped in increasing shadows, cast not only by the fame of other and greater romancers than Longfellow, but by the poetical works of the author himself; yet the future will hardly deny that it has merit intrinsic as well as temporary and personal. "Hyperion" seems to belong to a past period in American literature; but the books of Richter himself are now comparatively unread in Germany, which at the moment prefers to put its sentiment and emotion into the form of historical fiction rather than contemporary romance. The soul and its longings are eternal, but modes of expression vary with the changing years.

The poetic career of Longfellow may now, if we turn back to its beginning, be traced without interruption. With all its breadth of thought and variation of art, it was a symmetrical career, fitly related to the character of the man and to the times in which he lived.

In 1825 Longfellow left Brunswick, a graduate of Bowdoin College, eighteen years of age. The next year was published in Boston a neat volume of "Miscellaneous Poems selected from the *United States Literary Gazette.*" Fourteen bear the name of Longfellow, and are printed in the following order, here and there in the book: "Dirge Over a Nameless Grave"; "Thanksgiving"; "Sunrise On the Hills"; "Hymn of the Moravian Nuns"; "The Indian Hunter"; "The Angler's Song"; "An April Day"; "Autumn"; "Autumnal Nightfall"; "Woods in Winter"; "A Song of Savoy"; "Italian Scenery"; "The Venetian Gondolier"; "The Sea Diver." Most of these were not included by the author in the collected editions of his poems, but some have been well and widely known since their first appearance. None attained, or was to attain, the honorable position awarded to Bryant's "Thanatopsis," but all together, with certain obvious faults of juvenility and imitativeness, displayed not only precocity but a distinct, if rudimentary, character and a manifest and efficiently deliberate method of literary expression. The young Longfellow, it was already apparent, was to be a discreet poetic leader, in his day and way, and also a sharer of the contemporary time-influence in new America. His verse shows nature affecting thought, thought purifying feeling, and feeling rising into aspiration and action. When we call Longfellow "the poet of sympathy," as we rightly may, we should not

Longfellow's Early Poems.

forget this rising gamut in his verse. The old term "sensibility," as used in "Sir Charles Grandison" and other books of an elder day, may not inaptly describe a potent cause of Longfellow's charm and success. He was always an artist of the beautiful; but the beautiful, in his dictionary, was largely synonymous with the true and good. "The heart is the life," and our national heart-singer is Longfellow. His poetic blood does not surge with passion, nor ebb with horror; but it beats firm and true.

I have spoken already, and more than once, of Longfellow's wise service in broadening our American culture in many ways, and of his agreeable union of sentiment and sense in prose fiction. His verse was more important than his prose, and in it, from the first, appear the same qualities. Had imagination and creative power been lacking in him—as most certainly they were not—mere discretion or wise didacticism would have been humble poetic helpers; but when added to a real, however limited, creative genius, their service was invaluable. The genial circumstances of his life—broken only by inevitable death and by one swift tragedy—were largely the result of his own kindly and beneficent nature, which never ceased to affect his writings and his fame. Thus we explain the instant yet lasting recognition of the merits of the collection called "The Voices of the Night," the poet's first original volume, issued in 1839. Besides some of the earlier *Literary Gazette* pieces, and many

Causes of Longfellow's Popularity.

translations, here were but eight new poems and a prelude; but every one of these eight poems may fairly be said to have to-day a national and almost an international reputation. The "Hymn to the Night," "A Psalm of Life," "The Reaper and the Flowers," "The Light of Stars," "Footsteps of Angels," "Flowers," "The Beleaguered City," the "Midnight Mass for the Dying Year"—everybody knows them all. Mere popularity is but a poor test of value in art, but the popularity of poems showing good artistic quality is not lightly to be set aside. Criticism is but the record of intelligent opinion, and he would be a bold critic who should aver that the favor bestowed upon Longfellow is chiefly unintelligent. In fact, his American favor has from the first been given by the higher and middle classes, in greatest measure. Those who are interested in the cheap jingles of the comic opera or the popular sentimental parlor-ballads of war or home, are not affected by Longfellow as much as by the author of "Beautiful Snow." The common heart responds to many things in Shakespeare, in Wordsworth, in Emerson, as it responds to the "Psalm of Life," or "The Reaper and the Flowers," or "Resignation." Few poets have sung its hopes and regrets so well as Longfellow; but his renown is based, after all, upon a general acceptance of good work, and not upon any of the tricks adopted by the poetical demagogue. Mere recognition by the masses of readers, however numerous, is inevitably a temporary thing;

and we have already long passed the period when it was possible to suspect that Longfellow was the laureate of emotional unintelligence or sentimental mediocrity. His broad fame is a credit and not a discredit to the nature of his genius and the form of his verse. Eliminate from Longfellow's poems all that he owed to Heine and Germany, to Dante and Italy, to the French singers of the sunshine, and to the Scandinavian scalds of the sea; eliminate all that is ephemeral on the one hand or unduly sermonic on the other, and there still remains enough that is true poetry and mere poetry. When we read a volume of Longfellow we do not feel simply that we have been preached at, or furnished with a code of blue-laws, or made to memorize the Ten Commandments, or sign the total-abstinence pledge. I grant that the effect upon our minds is one of tranquillity, reverence, sympathy, optimism; but I am not yet ready to admit that these things are to be banished from literature, or that they form a blemish on the face of the literary product. If blemish they are, our definition of literature, as Milton and Dante, Wordsworth and Emerson knew it, must wholly be revised. Tranquillity, reverence, world-sympathy, and optimism are precisely the qualities of Emerson the poet, and though there was in Longfellow a gentle melancholy utterly unknown to Emerson's joyful trust in the existing order of the universe, both reached a similar end by different means. If Longfellow was but a poet of genial twaddle and mild morality, and if therefore he is

to fall in the days of materialism and soulless art, then he will not fall alone. Twaddle and insipidity are not hard to find in his voluminous versifyings, but they are very easily eliminated.

In reading the lyrics of Longfellow, produced in the long period between his college days and the year of his death, one is reminded of the difference between the typical short poem of our time and those of earlier days in English literature. Longfellow's lyrics, aside from the question of genius, are radically unlike Shakespeare's songs, fresh with the breath of Nature herself; the dainty love-poems and the conceits of "compliment and courtship" which came from Herrick and Suckling; the stately or classically fanciful odes of Milton; Dryden's successful experiments for St. Cecilia's day; or Gray's verse, which so curiously united the conventional and the original. The nineteenth-century short poem, if it would rise to favor, must either be merely and highly beautiful, or touched with some power of description, suggestion, or feeling which shall approve itself to the critic's head and to the reader's heart. Upon the latter quality most nineteenth-century readers are likely to insist. In the first respect Longfellow seldom triumphs; in the second he often succeeds. Intense clear beauty is not to be found in "The Rainy Day," "A Gleam of Sunshine," "The Reaper and the Flowers," "Resignation," or "A Psalm of Life." The last-named poem, perhaps the best loved of all, is perilously near to insipid

Longfellow as a Lyrist.

failure. Mere prosy flatness often encounters us in Longfellow's poems, and here it is reinforced by rugged sing-song versification. But elsewhere, as in "The Day is Done," Longfellow shows his power to express high thought in exquisite verse. That he did not oftener produce work purely lovely in form as well as in thought was surely his own fault. It hardly seems that "A Psalm of Life" and "The Day is Done" could come from the same hand:

> "The day is done, and the darkness
> Falls from the wings of Night,
> As a feather is wafted downward
> From an eagle in his flight;"

this is melody, the melody of the author of "Hiawatha," and of him who wrote such lines as

> "When she had passed, it seemed like the ceasing of
> exquisite music;"
>
> "The leaves of memory seemed to make
> A mournful rustling in the dark;"
>
> "I turn and set my back against the wall,
> And look thee in the face, triumphant Death;"
>
> "It came from the heaving breast of the deep;
> Silent as dreams are, and sudden as sleep."

The Poet's Soul and the Poet's Hand.

We look to the poet for an apt and artistic expression of that which we have vaguely thought but cannot fitly frame nor utter as we would. Shakespeare is the world's genius because he phrases, better than any other poet, the world's thought. He is not

the poet of aristocracy, or the middle classes, or the "masses." When a singer undertakes to voice the soul of a subdivision of humanity he meets the fate of the Reverend Mr. Dickinson, who thought it necessary to translate the New Testament into really refined English; or of Walt Whitman. Burns was not Burns because he was a peasant, nor was Emerson Emerson because he was a university lecturer on philosophy and the head of the Concord school. The universal, and not the local or the social, gave them their place. So it is in the case of the poetry of Longfellow, or any other favored singer. Had he deliberately undertaken to be an artist in verse, or an artificial workingman, or the representative of America or the "middle classes," whose laureate and *vates* some have called him, critics and readers would not be taking the trouble to discuss his works. He believed that he had a song to sing; and though he sang it with his own tone, and sentiment, and native feeling, and culture, and time-spirit, it was a song not designed specially for Portland or Cambridge, but for humanity. Our New-World academic singer was quite willing to leave to an Oxford professor the congenial task of chanting for cultured pessimists the charms of spiritual vacuity, in poetry so exquisite that it would have been Greek save for the fact that to the Greek mind it seemed necessary that manly thought and serene strength should accompany the meditative mood.

Longfellow wrote for humanity, and humanity

recognized its own hopes and feelings in the plain aphoristic patience and cheer of "A Psalm of Life"; the responsive, recognizing love of "Endymion"; the manly endurance of "The Light of Stars"; the tender and melancholy musing of "The Day is Done"; the affectionate commemoration of the departed in "Resignation"; and the ceaseless aspiration of "Excelsior" and "The Ladder of St. Augustine." The simple and lovely Christian code of action, from patience and self-sacrifice up to an ultimate heaven and the fulness of joy, is phrased gently and strongly, but not too didactically, by this singer who looked into his heart and wrote, that he might make his life and many a life sublime, though he must wait as well as labor. Sublimity so great as to overshadow Death itself, he told us, lay in the power to suffer and be strong. The heights of eternity, as well as of life, are attained by "toiling upward in the night"; for though

Poetry and the Religious Sentiment.

> "The air is full of farewells to the dying,
> And mournings for the dead,"

it is not less true that

> "There is no Death! What seems so is transition;
> This life of mortal breath
> Is but a suburb of the life elysian
> Whose portal we call death."

Bayard Taylor, who certainly was neither a bigot nor a platitudinarian, once wrote to Long-

fellow: "I know not who else before you has so wonderfully wedded Poetry and the Religious Sentiment." * I cannot agree with Taylor in his high praise of "The Divine Tragedy," nor in his favorable comparison between Longfellow and Milton; but his remark, as generally applicable to a large part of Longfellow's work, is both apt and just. Once when Lowell had become discouraged over the task of preparing a new edition of his own verse, he happened to take up a similar edition of Longfellow, "to see the type." "Before I knew it," he wrote to the elder poet, "I had been reading two hours and more. I never wondered at your popularity, nor thought it wicked in you; but if I had wondered, I should no longer, for you sang me out of all my worries." † Longfellow sang poets, as well as seamstresses and shopkeepers, out of all their worries; and the simple reason was that his heart was human and his art was poetic.

Longfellow's successive volumes of Minor Poems.

As we turn the pages of Longfellow's successive volumes of minor verse—"Ballads and other Poems," "Poems on Slavery," "The Belfry of Bruges and Other Poems," "The Seaside and the Fireside," "Flower-de-Luce," "Three Books of Song," "Aftermath," "The Masque of Pandora and Other Poems," "Kéramos and Other Poems," "Ultima Thule," and "In The Harbor" (posthu-

* "Final Memorials of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow," edited by Samuel Longfellow; 174.

† "Final Memorials of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow," 246, note.

mously published)—we note a gradual diminution of the number of highly popular and universally accepted lyrics. Most readers cared comparatively, little, I fear, even for the longer books of his later life, to which I shall recur. "The New England Tragedies," "The Divine Tragedy," "Judas Maccabæus," and "Michael Angelo," upon which the author worked laboriously and affectionately, were given a reception which was perhaps respectful, but no more. Only "The Hanging of the Crane" and the noble "Morituri Salutamus" aroused anything like enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is not the safest of critical guides, but in regard to Longfellow's work it was somewhat in accord with the calm verdict of criticism, which bestows no high approval upon most of the writings just mentioned. On the other hand, there is in Longfellow's later product an increased power of description of scenery and action, and a multiplication of not unpleasing dramatic or semi-dramatic pictures. Sonnets are also numerous, and the utterance of personal reflection is prevalent. The author's intellectual and poetical powers had not declined, though his old age was less successful than his middle-life in its fresh experiments in verse and theme. He had written his *credo* and uttered his "seven voices of sympathy"; and there was neither need nor wish to repeat them. Had he endeavored to do so, and had he chosen subjects and methods similar to those of his earlier famous lyrics and meditative

poems, he would have encountered criticism severer than that which met his later books. Emerson's suggestion that Longfellow "wrote too much" concerned the number, and not the character, of his last poems. They were not echoes of an earlier day. The bitterest, or at any rate the most unpleasant, criticism is that which states that an author has outlived his powers and can but try to repeat old tunes and tricks. Such criticism could never be applied to Longfellow. It is true that in all Longfellow's minor verse after the "Flower-de-Luce" volume of 1866 I find none that can fairly be awarded the general honors bestowed upon the old favorites, save "The Chamber Over the Gate," "Robert Burns," "The Sifting of Peter," and the sonnet on President Garfield. Admitting this very fully and frankly, the facts remain that Longfellow's previous work was done and well done; that he was too wise to try to step in the old footprints; that his later writing was marked by some successes of its own; and that, in artistic finish, the numerous sonnets produced in the last twenty years of his life not only equalled anything he had previously written but very easily put him at the head of all American sonneteers. The very soul and the true body of a sonnet are found in the two that follow, which, it should be added, are nowise superior to the noble series accompanying his translation of the "Divine Comedy":

Sonnets.

MY BOOKS.

Sadly as some old mediæval knight
  Gazed at the arms he could no longer wield,
  The sword two-handed and the shining shield
Suspended in the hall, and full in sight,
While secret longings for the lost delight
  Of tourney or adventure in the field
  Came over him, and tears but half concealed
Trembled and fell upon his beard of white,
So I behold these books upon their shelf,
  My ornaments and arms of other days;
Not wholly useless, though no longer used,
For they remind me of my other self,
  Younger and stronger, and the pleasant ways
In which I walked, now clouded and confused.

VICTOR AND VANQUISHED.

As one who long hath fled with panting breath
  Before his foe, bleeding and near to fall,
  I turn and set my back against the wall,
And look thee in the face, triumphant Death.
I call for aid, and no one answereth;
  I am alone with thee, who conquerest all;
  Yet me thy threatening form doth not appal,
For thou art but a phantom and a wraith.
  Wounded and weak, sword broken at the hilt,
With armor shattered, and without a shield,
  I stand unmoved; do with me what thou wilt;
I can resist no more, but will not yield.
  This is no tournament where cowards tilt;
The vanquished here is victor of the field.

The latter of these was written in Longfellow's seventieth year, and the former in his seventy-fifth. I do not see why, according to the best Italian and English models, the death-sonnet can-

not fairly be called perfect. He would be an able critic, or a great sonneteer, who could suggest an improvement in it.

It is time, in this survey of the poet's work, to turn to his longer, more ambitious, and more important books of verse, after examining which we shall be able to view more fully the literary attainment of his lifetime.

Late in life Longfellow jotted in his diary: "Our opinions are biassed by our limitations. Poets who cannot write long poems think that no long poems should be written." He must have been thinking of one of Poe's most foolish sayings, which needs no more respectful refutation than this. Longfellow could successfully write both short poems and long. Excellent, numerous, and widely popular as are his lyrics of the heart, they are scarcely more praiseworthy or more widely current than his two best poems of length, "Hiawatha" and "Evangeline." In middle life Longfellow found a new and notable fame awaiting him because of these well-known productions, the spirit and form of which became as familiar as those of "The Rainy Day" or "Excelsior." They are indissolubly connected with his life-work and fame, and their qualities and individual characteristics are Longfellow's, and are not shared, for the most part, by other books of their time.

The first of Longfellow's longer, and in that sense more ambitious, poems was "The Spanish Student," published in Cambridge in 1843. This

three-act play is a pretty little affair, no more. It may be read without difficulty, and with that pleasure which accompanies the sense that a neat plan has been agreeably carried out. Its Spanish scenes and story formed a part of the equipment of gentle romance which Longfellow got in Europe and so fully shared with his countrymen. Few indeed have been the meritorious plays written in English during the present century, measured even by the literary or library criterion. Still fewer have been the successful acted dramas produced by authors of the first contemporary rank. Longfellow's dramatic compositions, notwithstanding some manifest merits—cheery grace in "The Spanish Student" and the sublimity of rapt paraphrase in "The Divine Tragedy"—fell below the best of his other work. No other American poet of prominence ever completed a dramatic essay, so that Longfellow's relative failure is not heightened by any comparison with a fellow-worker's success.

"The Spanish Student."

When "Evangeline" appeared, in 1847, Longfellow was already the most widely known of our poets. Emerson's first collection of poems was printed that year, but it was long before he could be said to enjoy any wide renown. Poe's volumes and single successes were already familiar, but the general consent assigned to him a place much below that of the singer whom he so unjustly attacked. Had there been any doubt as to Longfellow's primacy, it was removed by the instant fame of this widely

"Evangeline, a Tale of Acadie."

discussed and oft-read book. The theme, at once idyllic and tragical, and the much-debated measure (unrhymed hexameter) were alike attractive. Many to whom poetry was unfamiliar became interested in the sad lives and loves of the banished Acadian girl and her lost betrothed, who met at last as tender, helpful nun and dying stranger. While the critics and rhymesters were discussing the metre, thousands of readers were sharing the sentiments of Doctor Holmes, who wrote to the poet: "The story is beautiful in conception as in execution. I read it as I should have listened to some exquisite symphony, and closed the last leaf, leaving a little mark upon it which told a great deal more than all the ink I could waste upon the note you have just finished."

"Tell me a story" has been the request made of singers and makers of prose fiction for many a century. "Evangeline" told a story with simple grace and quiet art, and with that human sympathy which pulses through nearly all that Longfellow ever wrote. A new-world theme, taken from an unfamiliar coast or from the wild interior, gave the poem an originality of plot which fitly accompanied its unfamiliar metre. There was in it enough of freshness to separate it from the well-known productions of its author, whose qualities of mind and soul it however reflected sufficiently clearly. He had been deeply and constantly indebted to Europe for poetic theme and color; but here he essayed a long poem of strictly

American tone. The experiment, discreetly made, was a wise one. The story was one suited to his mind, and his previous metrical experiments and obvious artistic powers, enabled him to give it a proper setting. Bold and high imagination, a soaring genius, were not his; but the imagination which is tender, sweet, and human was never far away from his hand. Therefore in "Evangeline" are shown, at large, the patient endurance and gentle love of which he had so often sung in lyrics. Here, too, Longfellow's habitual diffuseness almost ceased to be a blemish, for diffuseness is so essential a part of the English hexameter—alas, how different from the Greek!—that in Longfellow and Clough we scarcely stop to note it. The body and soul of the poem "Evangeline" offer no discordant impression to the reader's mind.

The story and the background.

The English novel, at its best, has told the story of the love and life of typical men and women of the English people, seen against a national background. English narrative and idyllic verse, from "The Canterbury Tales" to "Enoch Arden," has followed the same broad general plan as that of "The Vicar of Wakefield," the masterpiece of English fiction. Thus in "Evangeline," a love-romance in verse, and also a poem of idyllic description, the characters and scenes are of the western world, but the love and the pathos, like those of all great works of the sort, belong to universal humanity. The apt literary artist uses enough local color to give

his work a character of its own, and yet employs the large manner that appeals to a catholic audience. A woman's heart bereft of its lover's heart, and resting not till the two are reunited—"all the world loves a lover," and a goodly part of the world accordingly loves Evangeline and shares her sorrows. Her people are quaint colonists, near us in home and in time, yet seeming faint and far because of their foreign blood and their dispersion over the earth. Seldom has a poet chosen a theme more likely to win affection and enthusiasm from those to whom it has been presented; for seldom has a verse-painter found or framed a story so responsive to all his best aspirations and powers: to human sympathy, gentle pathos, quiet trustfulness, romantic sentiment, artistic originality.

"Evangeline" is least successful on its artistic side. I have no wish to reënter or to reopen the controversies attending the appearance of this famous hexameter poem. What hexameter *may* be in English is a question as yet a speculative one, though the history of our poetry for five centuries is instructive on this point. The fact remains that most of our poets have not used it, and that few indeed have used it well, either in original or translated verse. There is in it a fatal facility which, at first thought, would seem likely to tempt many versifiers. But that facility is so slippery and perilous that few have essayed it seriously or long. English hexameter is nearly prose, and rather weak

Longfellow's Hexameters.

prose at that. "All that flams is not flamboyant"; our hexameter resembles the Greek in little save that it has six beats. Majestic melody and a beautiful union of fixity and variety are lacking in it. The quantity and even the accent are too often arbitrary rather than essential. Longfellow used it to better advantage than Clough or Howells, and gave it a variety and grace of treatment beyond the range of Chapman's vigorous but crude powers. But his dreams of its utility in Homeric translation were were visions of what can never be. His own experimental lines from Homer are feeble in comparison with Tennyson's specimen from the "Iliad" in unrhymed pentameter. English versification is a rich and noble thing, as strong as the Greek, as graceful as the Latin, with a better accent-system than the French, and more musical than the German. The nineteenth century, in the work of Shelley, Coleridge, Keats, Scott, Poe, Swinburne, and Longfellow himself, has given new and brilliant proofs of the power and range of the poetry of the English tongue. But hexameter never has been and never will be one of its strongest instruments. At their best, Longfellow's hexameters had an idyllic sweetness and grace; at their worst, the clumsy dactyls sounded like hoof-beats on a muddy road. The chief value of "Evangeline" as a metrical experiment was limited but great: it proved that English hexameters were best fitted for idyllic, rather than Homeric, narrative. In "The Courtship of Miles

Standish" the charm was once more invoked, but half in vain; in the latter poem we no longer wander through

"Green Acadian meadows, with sylvan rivers among them,"

but listen too often to the cacophonous

"Praise of the virtuous woman, as she is described in the Proverbs,"

or hear how she

"Said in a tremulous voice, 'Why don't you speak for yourself, John?'"

But Longfellow's best hexameters, in "Evangeline," though representing neither the force nor the flexibility of the Greek measure of the same name, had a genuine musical beauty of their own. Our language, lacking the inherent or local quantity of the Greek, and its particles and inflections, with their union of expressiveness of thought and rapidity of movement, cannot reproduce the Homeric metre. Not all the praise of enthusiastic friends, and not all the acknowledged skill of Longfellow, could make us approve such an experimental rendition as he once made of the opening lines of the Iliad:

Sing, O Goddess, the wrath of Peleidean Achilles,
Baleful, that brought disasters uncounted upon the Achaians.
Many a gallant soul of heroes flung into Hades,
And the heroes themselves as a prey to the dogs and to all the
Fowls of the air for thus the will of Zeus was accomplished;
From the time when first in wrangling parted asunder
Atreus' son, the monarch of men, and godlike Achilles.

This specimen (left in Longfellow's diary, and of course not rigidly to be criticised) is almost pitiful in its inadequacy. The question, moreover, is not one of Homeric translation. Bryant and Tennyson have shown that our greatest English metre—unrhymed pentameter—can in some ways reproduce the power of the chief Greek measure. What we learn from Longfellow is not so much the limitations of hexameter, the imperfect shadow of its namesake, as the beauty which it may sometimes show. Critic and general reader are at one in praising such lines and passages as these:

Naught but tradition remains of the beautiful village of Grand Pré.

Darkened by shadows of earth, but reflecting an image of heaven.

Late, with the rising moon, returned the wains from the marshes,
Laden with briny hay, that filled the air with its odor.

Under the open sky, in the odorous air of the orchard.

Sweetly over the village the bell of the Angelus sounded.

" Benedicite," murmured the priest, in tones of compassion.

And, as the voice of the priest repeated the service of sorrow,
Lo, with a mournful sound, like the voice of a vast congregation,
Solemnly answered the sea, and mingled its roar with the dirges.

Into the golden stream of the broad and swift Mississippi.

Day after day they glided adown the turbulent river.

Over their heads the towering and tenebrous boughs of the cypress
Met in a dusky arch, and trailing mosses in mid-air
Waved like banners hung on the walls of ancient cathedrals.

Then in his place, at the prow of the boat, rose one of the oarsmen,
And, as a signal sound, if others like them peradventure
Sailed on these gloomy and midnight streams, blew a blast on his bugle.
Wild through the dark colonnades and corridors leafy the blast rang,
Breaking the seal of silence, and giving tongues to the forest.
Soundless above them the banners of moss just stirred to the music.
Multitudinous echoes awoke and died in the distance,
Over the watery floor, and beneath the reverberant branches;
But not a voice replied; no answer came from the darkness;
And, when the echoes had ceased, like a sense of pain was the silence.

Then he beheld, in a dream, once more the home of his childhood;
Green Acadian meadows, and sylvan rivers among them,
Village, and mountain, and woodlands; and, walking under their shadow,
As in the days of her youth, Evangeline rose in his vision.

Still stands the forest primeval; but far away from its shadow,
Side by side, in their nameless graves, the lovers are sleeping,
Under the humble walls of the little Catholic churchyard,
In the heart of the city, they lie, unknown and unnoticed.
Daily the tides of life go ebbing and flowing beside them,
Thousands of throbbing hearts, where theirs are at rest and forever,

Thousands of aching brains, where theirs no longer are busy,
Thousands of toiling hands, where theirs have ceased from their labors,
Thousands of weary feet, where theirs have completed their journey!

Blame not Longfellow that he did not make better hexameters; praise him that he wrote so good, and framed them into an idyl of true and original beauty.

"Evangeline" was a poem of idyllic pathos; "The Courtship of Miles Standish" a love story tinged with humor, and set against the background of historic Massachusetts. The dry bones of Puritanism lived once more when Longfellow breathed upon them the spirit of the human love that never grows old, and that could not be crushed by the austerity of dogma or the poverty of colonial beginnings. Longfellow, at his best, was a good story-teller; and though "The Courtship of Miles Standish" is distinctly a smaller and lower production than "Evangeline," its constructive merit is considerable. The swinging measure of the hexameter somehow lent itself well to the sly and archaic humor of the tale; and Longfellow, who always required plenty of room in which to make a jest, here pleasantly mingled the amusing, the descriptive, and the passionate. The picture seems possible rather than actual; the humanity of the poetic Evangeline legend appears truer than that of the well-known Puritan story; and

"The Courtship of Miles Standish."

the later book merely pleases where the former touched the heart. This, indeed, is precisely what it aimed to do; and we have in "The Legend of Miles Standish" another proof of the breadth of range and achievement in which Longfellow surpassed all other American poets, and in which he was approached by Lowell only, at a considerable distance. Our chief representative of continental culture was also a peculiarly American poet, even aside from his masterpiece, "Hiawatha," the most American poem of all.

On June 22, 1854, when Longfellow was forty-seven years old, he made this entry in his diary: "I have at length hit upon a plan for a poem on the American Indians, which seems to me the right one, and the only. It is to weave together their beautiful traditions into a whole. I have hit upon a measure, too, which I think the right and only one for such a theme." Longfellow was a painstaking literary artist, who carefully analyzed the thought and as carefully planned the form. He was a good judge, furthermore, of the merit and probable success of his productions. It is true that he sometimes erred; he worked for more than twenty years over his trilogy of "Christus"; planned but never completed an addition to its closing part, as finally printed; and sent forth "The Divine Tragedy," the portion first in order and last in composition, with more misgivings than ever accompanied the advent of any other of his works. This completed trilogy never fulfilled the hopes of "the

consecration and the poet's dream"; and the reader is not—as the cautious author was not—at a loss to discover why. But the author's serene confidence concerning "Hiawatha"—expressed, let us remember, in a private memorandum, and not for the public—was perfectly justified by the result. The poem remains the greatest achievement of Longfellow, and the one surest to arouse interest as the years go by. Its success can never be repeated; its maker himself wisely essayed no new triumph in the same field. In theme and in general and special treatment "Hiawatha," to repeat a phrase already used, is our "nearest approach to an American epic." It is a semi-epic *about* a race, and not *from* it; yet notwithstanding this fact, it is to be ranked with such productions as "Beowulf" or "The Song of Roland."

"Hiawatha."

The character of the North American Indian at his best, described historically by Francis Parkman and romantically by Fenimore Cooper, is here set forth poetically. An adequate basis of truthfulness to aboriginal ideas is retained; but upon it is built a fabric of imagination and dreamland. Thus, the poet tells us, thought the wild man of the west, in his loftier moods and more poetic legends; and his interpreter in verse adds to his fidelity to the originals a constructive art lacking in the Indian mind. Here are the skies and waters, the woods and hunting-life, the fancies and the loves of the white man's predecessors. Many tales are gathered into a symmetrical whole,

the hero-legend forming, after a familiar plan, the chain upon which lesser stories and mythological narrations are hung. Everything may be included, if it be characteristic. The career of a typical man through life, in his experiences between the unknown and the unknown—such is any race-epic, and such is "Hiawatha" in a full degree. Beside the central figure are his fellows and his love; above him are the powers of light and darkness; beneath is the all-nourishing earth; and before him the land of the hereafter. The plan is rounded and complete; the scene is filled with representative figures; the movement is steady and symmetrical; and yet behind all the poet stands invisible, such is the excellent art he has shown. The race-poem, too, has a universal bearing. It touches the mystery and destiny of all human life. In Hiawatha the reader sees not only the representative of a westward-moving people, but also an allegorical picture of one's own progress onward.

But the reader of "Hiawatha" does not labor over its pages as a student or philosopher, studying ethnology or the mystery of the universe. He turns to it as he would "pore upon the brook that babbles by." Here in these stories are a garland of flowers, a fair and shadowy vision, an odor of an unknown land. Now that the superficial controversies concerning the trochaics of "Hiawatha" have been forgotten, I suppose few will quarrel with the art of the poem. When a metre is musical in itself, is well fitted to the idea

and even the nomenclature of its theme, and is made the natural means of sweetly singing the song of the author, there would seem to be little for the critics to quarrel about. Nothing succeeds like success; and here the artist and poet accurately measured his theme, his scheme, and his powers of execution. Let those who have rivalled or surpassed him in such a measurement be the ones who may venture to laugh at the alleged eccentricity of this *sui generis* poem of the western world. But it is not the art of "Hiawatha" which most pleases us. We read it not because of its form but because of its nature. These legends of prairie-land belong to the great story-book of the world, that treasury of lay and legend which delights the childhood of a man and a people, and brightens long days of labor and nights devoid of ease, for those, at least, who carry the childlike heart into middle-life and age.

Should you ask me, whence these stories?
Whence these legends and traditions,
With the odors of the forest,
With the dew and damp of meadows,
With the curling smoke of wigwams,
With the rushing of great rivers,
With their frequent repetitions,
And their wild reverberations,
As of thunder in the mountains?

I should answer, I should tell you,
"From the forests and the prairies,
From the great lakes of the Northland,
From the land of the Ojibways,

From the land of the Dacotahs,
From the mountains, moors, and fenlands,
Where the heron, the Shuh-shuh-gah,
Feeds among the reeds and rushes.
I repeat them as I heard them
From the lips of Nawadaha,
The musician, the sweet singer."

Should you ask where Nawadaha
Found these songs, so wild and wayward,
Found these legends and traditions,
I should answer, I should tell you,

"In the birds'-nests of the forest,
In the lodges of the beaver,
In the hoof-prints of the bison,
In the eyry of the eagle!

"All the wild-fowl sang them to him,
In the moorlands and the fenlands,
In the melancholy marshes:
Chetowaik, the plover, sang them,
Mahng, the loon, the wild-goose, Wawa,
The blue heron, the Shuh-shuh-gah,
And the grouse, the Mushkodasa! . . . . . "

There he sang of Hiawatha,
Sang the song of Hiawatha,
Sang his wondrous birth and being,
How he prayed and how he fasted,
How he lived, and toiled, and suffered,
That the tribes of men might prosper,
That he might advance his people!

Ye who love the haunts of Nature,
Love the sunshine of the meadow,
Love the shadow of the forest,
Love the wind among the branches,
And the rain-shower and the snow-storm,
And the rushing of great rivers,

Through their palisades of pine-trees,
And the thunder in the mountains,
Whose innumerable echoes
Flap like eagles in the eyries:—
Listen to these wild traditions,
To this song of Hiawatha!

Ye who love a nation's legends,
Love the ballads of a people,
That like voices from afar off
Call to us to pause and listen,
Speak in tones so plain and childlike,
Scarcely can the ear distinguish
Whether they are sung or spoken:—
Listen to this Indian legend,
To this song of Hiawatha!

Ye whose hearts are fresh and simple,
Who have faith in God, and Nature,
Who believe, that in all ages
Every human heart is human,
That in even savage bosoms
There are longings, yearnings, strivings
For the good they comprehend not,
That the feeble hands and helpless,
Groping blindly in the darkness,
Touch God's right hand in that darkness
And are lifted up and strengthened:—
Listen to this simple story,
To this song of Hiawatha!

In "Hiawatha" we wander amid woodland shadows, with the far, light clouds above us and the black American rivers at our feet. The smell of pine-needles is in the air, and the whirr of the partridge or the liquid song of the thrush occasionally falls upon the ear. Chaucer put the

fresh breezes of old England into his perennially vital tales; Longfellow sings to us ruder legends than Chaucer gathered, and charms us with the stories of those virgin prairies and uncut forests that knew not even a crude civilization like that of the court of King Richard the Second.

These trochaics are excellently suited to the presentation and fit portrayal of that spontaneous beauty which belongs to Nature and her children, unspoiled by arts and civilization. The very regularity of the short-line measure is an advantage; it goes along in an agreeably monotonous undertone that reminds one of the accompaniment to Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* songs, whereby the steadily purling brook is represented, while the soaring air tells the story of the maid of the mill. In "Hiawatha" the words are the aboriginal song and the measure is the accompaniment, the two being combined in that natural union which marks the true lyric poem, whether of ten lines or ten thousand. Hiawatha, Minnehaha, Shawondasee, Wenonah, Mahnomonee, Nahma, Nokomis—the very names are little poems; while the more guttural and explosive words of the Indian dialect but increase the charm of the melody by their occasional twang of strength or clash of discord.

Spontaneous Beauty.

I suppose the most obvious criticism evoked by "Hiawatha" is based upon its tautology and consequent length. The tautology is partly that of translation and partly that of paraphrase. He must be a learned or a

Repetitions and Parallelisms.

fastidious reader who objects to such self-explanatory lines as these, which so often occur throughout the whole poem:

> Forth upon the Gitche Gumee,
> On the shining Big-Sea-Water,
> With his fishing-line of cedar,
> Of the twisted bark of cedar,
> Forth to catch the sturgeon Nahma,
> Mishe-Nahma, King of Fishes.
> In his birch-canoe exulting
> All alone went Hiawatha.
>
> Through the clear, transparent water
> He could see the fishes swimming
> Far down in the depths below him;
> See the yellow perch, the Sahwa,
> Like a sunbeam in the water,
> See the Shawgashee, the craw-fish,
> On the white and sandy bottom.

As for the parallelisms in the poem, their fitness, then, may be defended on the double ground that clearness was essential, and that the Indian character, like the Hebrew, lends itself readily to this form of utterance. The poem as a whole is not prolix, and any section illustrates the fact that force and even brevity are often increased by the cumulative method which belongs to the parallelism.

Thirty years after the publication of "Hiawatha" we can look calmly at the excited but now unimportant discussions that attended its appearance. We will readily admit that the measure is easily written; but who save Longfellow has mas-

tered it and turned it to the implicit service of a poetic idea? We grant, too, that in the poem the Indian character is idealized; but it is not distorted. One is not ready to aver that a semi-ideal picture of any part of humanity is to be rejected because it is not strictly realistic as regards the average race-type; otherwise we must throw aside Homer, the "Divine Comedy," "Faust," the "Elder Edda," the "Song of Roland." "Hiawatha" possesses the poetic merits of imagination, descriptive power, native originality, and broad interest; and so, fortunately, it is able to take care of its own place in literature. It is a book that seems to its present readers to miss greatness; but it is quite possible that the time will come when, his other writings forgotten or ignored, the name of Longfellow will be chiefly known as that of the author of "Hiawatha."

Of all Longfellow's works the most ambitious, on the whole, was that trilogy which was published in its complete form in 1872, under the title of "Christus, a Mystery." The first part, "The Divine Tragedy," had appeared in the preceding year; the third, "The New England Tragedies," in 1868; and the second, "The Golden Legend," as far back as 1851. When issued together, under the final title, they were equipped with two connecting Interludes and a Finale, then first published. The general design of the work was to present three pictures of Christianity, in widely separated ages: those of its founder, of mediæval Roman-

"Christus, a Mystery."

ism in its better estate, and of New England Puritanism. The plan was a good one, but the selection of periods, and the execution, very imperfect. "The Golden Legend" versified an old German story of a maiden's self-sacrifice for her prince, who rewarded her with all his love and half his throne. The story is pretty but not significant, in the broad and long history of Christianity. "The New England Tragedies," in their division, represent a cold, hard, and temporary phase of religious life, strong in the ideas of theism and the "perseverance of the saints," but sadly lacking in the all-embracing *caritas* of Christ, which has been the most important note of Christianity from the beginning. The paraphrase of the Gospels in "The Divine Tragedy," the first part of the trilogy, is noble in language and spiritual in effect; few writers in Christian literature, from Cædmon to our own day, have so well succeeded in this difficult task. But the contrast between this division and the two other selected episodes is grotesque, almost painful. A score of more significant themes in Christian history might have been selected. The union of the three parts of "Christus" is so infelicitous as almost to seem an afterthought, but the final biography of the poet shows that such was not the case. To the third and last division he once thought of adding a picture of the life of the Moravians in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, which fit and characteristic addition was never made. The poet himself has more than once recorded his mis-

givings concerning the first and third parts of this book; they afford another proof of the general sanity of his art and the justice of self-esteem. Indeed, the whole was less than the sum of its parts; for "The Divine Tragedy" and "The Golden Legend" were good in their respective ways, though not great. In a large composite poem of this sort a partial success is a virtual failure.

In 1863, when he published the first part of the "Tales of a Wayside Inn," Longfellow had reached a critical point in the career of a sucessful author. He was fifty-six years old; his reputation was firmly established, both upon his subjective lyrics and upon "Evangeline" and "Hiawatha"; and the usual question arose, in the minds of his readers, whether that reputation was to be increased, maintained, or impaired in the latter years of his life. New methods and forces in English verse were beginning to appear or to attract the public: Browning, Arnold, and the young pre-Raphaelite poets in England, and Whitman and the western or ultra "American" singers in the United States. The reputation of Emerson, too, was steadily and surely advancing to a point from which it was not to recede; Poe was gaining in foreign renown with the passing years; Whittier and some lesser lyrists were rivalling the Cambridge bard in their poems of the war; and Lowell, in his later work, was displaying somewhat of the depth of Emerson and the musical flow of the verse of his neighbor and friend.

On the whole, during the two remaining decades of Longfellow's life, there was the maintenance of a reputation already won, and not its substantial increase or evident diminution. Accurately measuring his powers, he continued to write admirable short poems of thought, sentiment, or suggestion, which, though not rivalling the popularity of his earlier poems, aroused no feeling of disappointment and no special complaint of inadequacy. Of the merit of his noble and self-contained sonnets I have already spoken.

In "The Tales of a Wayside Inn," Longfellow grouped together by a device familiar since the days of the "Decameron" and the "Canterbury Tales," graphic pictures of local life and character, and duly representative tales from the old world and the new. The merit of the stories and interludes of the several series of "Tales of a Wayside Inn," appearing at intervals during a decade, was on the whole a declining one; but the whole work is an enjoyable, varied, and characteristic miscellany of tales in verse. The weather-beaten old inn at Sudbury; the thinly-veiled characters from real life; the interesting and well-told episodes of narration and song, combined to produce a work that charmed and will charm. The giving of pleasure—that is a true mark of a picture or poem deserving its name; and surely pleasure is to be found in many of these simple, graceful, and pure tales of to-day or of old. The poet seems to sing his natural thought; the public has but to listen and to ap-

"Tales of a Wayside Inn."

plaud with the sense that it is still the poet's mission, as in the days of "Dan Chaucer, the first warbler," to tell us of nature and human nature, of wildwood, shaw, and green, and the hearts of men and women.

> These are the tales those merry guests
> Told to each other, well or ill;
> Like summer birds that lift their crests
> Above the borders of their nests
> And twitter, and again are still.
> These are the tales, or new or old,
> In idle moments idly told;
> Flowers of the field with petals thin,
> Lilies that neither toil nor spin,
> And tufts of wayside weeds and gorse
> Hung in the parlor of the inn
> Beneath the sign of the Red Horse.

Two of Longfellow's larger works remain to be mentioned. In the closing months of 1867, after many a year of preparation, was printed that literal and isometrical unrhymed translation of the "Divine Comedy" of Dante which remains closely associated with the fame of Longfellow, to whom culture in America already owed so much. Its strict fidelity to the original; the careful scholarship which had literally scrutinized every word, often with the assistance of competent friends who met regularly to aid the translator; the frequent combination of a life-giving spirit with the exact letter of utterance, gave this version a place which it is not likely to lose, at the head, on the whole, of English translation of Dante. The literalist school of translators

Longfellow's Dante.

does not often receive aid from a more valuable or learned helper, at once scholar and poet. Longfellow's Dante possesses nearly every merit save that of readability; in peculiarly important passages it sacrifices too much to the original; and its unrhymed lines, with their too frequent use of the feminine ending of the verse, become wearisome long before the solemn journey from hell to paradise is completed. This feminine ending is one thing in Italian, and another in English. It must be said, too, that Dante's soaring fire does not flame in Longfellow.

"Michael Angelo."

The drama "Michael Angelo," left by the poet in manuscript, was his latest essay in dramatic composition, and one of his longest. It has some fine lines and strong passages, but it leaves upon the mind no characteristic impress, no lasting historical or personal picture. A play that does not in some way stamp itself upon the memory is an unsuccessful play, especially when it attempts something more than mere amusement. Longfellow was not at his best in his dramas, but in his lyrics, idyls, and narratives, and in such panoramic poems as "The Building of the Ship," "The Rope walk," "Rain in Summer," "Kèramos," or "The Hanging of the Crane." He could admirably present a series of pictures or a chain of stories; but he could not tell us, in forceful scenes and acts and plays, how

> "Men's lives, like oceans, change
> In shifting tides, and ebb from either shore
> Till the strong planet draws them on once more."

In estimating the life-work of Longfellow as a poet, the personality and the product cannot be separated. The sweet and sympathetic and strong and self-reliant soul, so fully portrayed in the three-volume life by the poet's brother, ever animates the verse. Longfellow looked out upon life and sang his thoughts concerning its joys and its mysteries. His lyrics and idyls and dramatic studies and reflective poems illuminate with catholic sympathy and quiet optimism the procession of human existence: childhood, youth with its loves and hopes, middle-life with its bereavements and struggles, age with its wasting and weariness and patiently continued work, death as the transition to another stage of progress and experience. His poems lack not thought, nor feeling, nor art, but well combine the three. What he misses in intellectual greatness he possesses in heartfulness. He was the St. John of our American apostles of song. He allowed the poets of intricate philosophy, the sad singers of wan pre-Raphaelitism, the cosmic bards of atlas and city directory, and the "howling dervishes of song," to go their way while he went his. His word was spoken to those who work and win, struggle and lose, love and bury. He ranged from the American hearthstone to the castle-towers of the Rhine. He adorned the simplest thought with spoils of mediæval and continental culture. An American, he was too wise to refuse to learn of Europe. A man of culture, he knew as well as Hawthorne

The Man and the Poet.

that mere selfish intellectual wisdom turns the heart to stone. A man of books, he carried his sympathies with him as he entered his library door. His reading was bent toward the betterment and the utterance of his good impulses, and not to their crushing. A life-long moralizer, he shunned cant as the twin-devil of hypocrisy. He made the most of himself, in life and letters. Neither Providence nor error cut short his earthly service to song. We dare not say that his service shall last

> "As long as the river flows,
> As long as the heart has passions,
> As long as life has woes;"

but it will be until another shall sing the same songs better.

Nothing is easier than to point out Longfellow's limitations; not a few have been already noted in this chapter. His broad range of achievement, the very number of the things which he attempted, make these limitations and imperfections all the more manifest. But how many poets proffer a round and perfect life-work? It is idle to deny Longfellow's faults; it is equally idle to shut one's eyes in the presence of his merits. Neither is it wise to attempt to assign him an immovable place in American letters, or to label him, in numerical order, first or second of our poets. Emerson's thought, as I have said, is more profound, and his poetic philosophy delves deeper and soars beyond. Other poets, mayhap,

surpass Longfellow in special powers or achievements. But all in all, Longfellow's place in our verse-product has deservedly been very broad and conspicuous, nor can it shrink to narrow limits for many a year. Without his work, how much lessened would the value of the national literature be. The thoughts of humanity, the gifts of culture, the graces of art, were fused in a poet's imagination and sent forth everywhere. The poet sang, too, of

> "Dreams that the soul of youth engage
> Ere fancy has been quelled;
> Old legends of the monkish page,
> Traditions of the saint and sage,
> Tales that have the rime of age,
> And chronicles of eld."

In this "Prelude" to Longfellow's first book he exclaimed: "Look, then, into thine heart, and write!" Into the depths of that ocean of joy and beauty and danger and unrest he peered to the end of his life, and learned its lessons, and wrote them for the people. The manly and helpful cheer of his youth was never stilled. Fifty years after his graduation day at Bowdoin he stood once more beneath the Brunswick pines and looked forward into the future with the unquenched ardor of youth, under that nighttime of earth which is the dawn of eternity. Never did poet more nobly say *ave atque vale* than did Longfellow in this "Morituri Salutamus" poem, thus closing:

"Morituri Salutamus."

Shall we sit idly down and say
The night hath come; it is no longer day?
The night hath not yet come; we are not quite
Cut off from labor by the failing light;
Something remains for us to do or dare;
Even the oldest tree some fruit may bear;
Not Œdipus Coloneus, or Greek ode
Or tales of pilgrims that one morning rode
Out of the gateway of the Tabard Inn,
But other something, would we but begin;
For age is opportunity no less
Than youth itself, though in another dress,
And as the evening twilight fades away
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.

CHAPTER IV.

EDGAR ALLAN POE.

No book in my library contains a more interesting and suggestive portrait than that which forms the frontispiece of the most extended biography of Poe. It is a photograph copied from a daguerreotype formerly owned by the poet's friend "Stella," Estelle Anna Lewis. The picture is a truth-teller, one of those accurate presentations of the real man which photography is occasionally able to produce. No etcher or engraver has altered the lines or changed the life of the eye; one feels that he is looking at Poe himself. Around the portrait gather the memories of words spoken or written concerning him, by men who were the daily companions of his genius and of his selfishness; and at length the personality of the poet seems almost present—the pale, high forehead, the dark, clustering hair, the deep sad eyes, the supercilious and irresolute mouth, the slight, proud figure, the traces of dissipation marring the evident genius. One side of the face is longer, manlier, and handsomer than the other; we seem to be looking at Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde at the moment when change impends. In our own minds, as we gaze at this counterfeit present-

Edgar Allan Poe, 1809–1849.

ment, so significant and so sad, pity and disgust struggle with the reverence due to genius. Here is a being weakly yielding to intemperance and to worse ingratitude; yet here is one of the most distinct and unquestioned powers in the history of American intellect. "This is the porcelain clay of humankind"—how fragile and how fine.

Poe's personality.

At the very outset of any critical discussion of Poe's literary products it is necessary to obtain a clear view of two things: the relation between his personality and his work, and the peculiar character of the field occupied by the best of his poems and tales. The life-story of Poe arouses peculiar interest in young minds, and possesses a never-ending fascination for that class of essayists and biographers which delights in attempting to "reverse history," to paint a nimbus around the sinner's head, or to throw mud at Aristides the just. Poe's first biographer, formerly his friend and latterly his literary executor, undoubtedly presented too distorted and ill-favored a portrait of his subject. Later writers, however, not content with appealing from some of Dr. Griswold's severer judgments, have sought to vindicate Poe throughout, a task manifestly impossible. The facts presented in the largest and most laudatory biography (Ingram's) are in themselves enough to sadden or repel the impartial reader. From the careful study of nearly all of the vast mass of Poe literature, and from diligent inquiry among those of his contemporaries with whom I could speak, I am satisfied that

Poe, on the one hand, was industrious, usually devoted to his wife and her mother, and chaste in thought and life; while, on the other, he was tactless, imperious and wayward of temper, too fond of sentimental attitudinizing, occasionally treacherous toward loyal friends, and wretchedly intemperate. With these plain statements, to which should be added a denial that he was addicted to the opium habit, the literary historian may dismiss the personality of Poe. Few authors of note have so completely severed the life and the book. All that Poe could have written we have, and we have it in as finished form as his utmost diligence could give. No American author save Hawthorne ever wrote and rewrote with such sane and constant care. The notion that Poe "dashed off" his poems in his wilder moods is at the farthest remove from the truth. Poe's sentimental friendships and personal or local prejudices colored his critical work, it is true; and of course his genius was deeply moved and modified in its nature by the awful and constantly remembered progress of death through his little world of intense friendships; but his poems and his imaginative prose, on which, of course, his ultimate fame must rest, were neither weakened nor stained by the sins and miseries of a woe-begone life. The very problem of immortality, around which fell his deepest shadows and above which hung his serenest star, he treated in the manner of a man to whom the "eternal streams" were nearer than the Hudson or the Schuylkill. Poe's

own field is that of the purely imaginative; and there his chief writings, creations of mere mind, have

> "Left but the name
> Of his fault and his sorrows behind."

Poe's literary field.

The genius of Poe expressed itself, from the first, in a literary field coextensive with the nature and powers of that genius. His critical writings, earnest and vigorous as they were, did not express his largest self. They performed a useful service in banishing many poor books and weak writers from the field of American literature; though too often prejudiced, they were never timid, and they called attention to some of the deeper elements of literary creation at a time when superficiality was too common. These criticisms, written before the masters had done their best work, and while the mists of sentimentalism temporarily shrouded the literary landscape, were necessarily of little permanent value. The papers on chirography, cryptography, the "automaton chess-player," and similar themes, were of course the by-play of an active mind, possessed of unusual powers of analysis. Poe's fame rests upon his tales and poems; and the essential nature of the best of them is the same. They deal with weird and ethereal beauty; with the desolate sadness of a half-despairing and half-hoping soul before the iron gate of death; with the strange lights and unworldly sounds of the realm of pure romance; with the parable of shadow and the fable of silence. Theirs is not

the high philosophy of life, the manly, ethical self-reliance of Saxon independence. Had Poe striven often to enter Hawthorne's domain, the allegory of conscience, his failures would have been speedy; had he sought to repeat the hated Longfellow's "seven voices of sympathy," the result would have been grotesque. We cannot all do all things. Poe knew what he could do and did it. The knowledge and the choice were so instinctive, and the expression was so complete, that never did the spontaneity which is the soul of art make more manifest exhibition than in his best prose and verse. I am far from saying that Poe never over-estimated his powers: he absurdly exalted his "prose-poem" of "Eureka"; he was apparently blind to his failures in the department of the would-be humorous; and he even prided himself on some seemingly learned review which was really the product of a journalist's "cram." But it is to be remembered that the final edition of Poe's writings includes nearly all of his hack-work—literary criticisms of ephemeral and valueless books, personal sketches of temporary interest, newspaper discussions of mechanical curiosities of the day, and stories and sketches written by a poor man for daily bread. The wonder is that the average excellence is so high. Seldom is the task-work of an editor or "regular contributor" so conscientiously performed and so closely related to the real mind of the writer. Poe is not wholly to be blamed for his poverty, nor for the passage of time, nor for

the state of American literature when he wrote; and the fact is indisputable that he measured his mind and entered his true field with a wisdom as confident as that which dominated the life-work of Emerson or Hawthorne. Their serenity toward the things just beyond he utterly lacked; but in his own domain he was a conscious monarch. This self-confidence of mind is in itself, when justified by achievement, a mark of genius; the fated sky gives free scope.

The measure of Poe's Success.

There are two measures of literary success, the one relative and the other absolute. Shakespeare is Shakespeare because he rises above the world's best chorus: Homer, Æschylus, Sophocles, Virgil, Dante, Milton, Goethe. But Coleridge, in "The Ancient Mariner," attains a single intense success coextensive with the ambition of the poem. If the estimate of an author's rank is in the large sense relative and comparative, we properly consider his breadth of theme, varied aims and triumphs, relations to the problems of the world and the universe of matter and mind. By such an estimate we view a Shakespeare, a Beethoven, a Raphael; and there can be no question that the world's masters in every art are those of depth and breadth and height of thought and work. But the place of a flower or a gem is as legitimate and true as that of a mountain or a Parthenon. If the artistic act fitly follows the artistic thought, the resultant success and the attendant pleasure are not the less abso-

lute because relatively less great. Considering that which Poe sought, in a part of soul-land where few have dwelt and sung as did he, it must readily be admitted that his poetic attainment followed his poetic search. "Very valueless verses" have his poems been called by a realistic critic; and so they are, when compared with Emerson's or Wordsworth's apt answers to the riddle of life. But the shade of Emerson might now say to the shade of Poe:

> "The self-same Power that brought me there brought you."

The field of thought and genius is broad enough for all three poets; there is in it a place not only for Yarrow and Musketaquid but for "an ultimate dim Thule,"

> "A wild weird clime that lieth, sublime,
> Out of Space—out of Time."

Over the whole earthly life of Poe hung an eternal vision of pure beauty. If the vision were in fleshly form, he addressed it with the reverence of a worshipper entering some classic temple, as in the familiar fifteen lines forming the well-known lyric "To Helen": A poet of beauty.

> Helen, thy beauty is to me
> Like those Nicéan barks of yore,
> That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
> The weary, wayworn wanderer bore
> To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
  Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
  To the glory that was Greece,
  And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo! in yon brilliant window niche
  How statue-like I see thee stand,
The agate lamp within thy hand!
  Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
  Are Holy Land!

Notwithstanding some alterations in later life, this chaste and round lyric belongs to the poet's earliest years. Its tone of personal address is apparent at a glance; neither Poe nor the majority of the world's poets sang of intellectual abstractions or mere capital-letter personifications of imaginary beauty. But here, as in so many of Poe's poems, the earthly form is made to assume an unearthly and half-spiritual guise; upon the material and fleshly there falls a light from an immaterial world. Beauty and love are all-in-all, but the beauty is not of the court or the street, nor is the love that of this middle-earth alone. No writer of his time ever fell prostrate upon the grave in morbid desolation so utter; but nevertheless the poet's eye turned with clear vision "To One in Paradise":

Thou wast all that to me, love,
  For which my soul did pine—
A green isle in the sea, love,
  A fountain and a shrine,
All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers,
  And all the flowers were mine.

Ah, dream too bright to last!
  Ah, starry Hope! that didst arise
But to be overcast!
  A voice from out the Future cries,
"On, on!"—but o'er the Past
  (Dim gulf!) my spirit hovering lies
Mute, motionless, aghast!

For alas! alas! with me
  The light of Life is o'er!
  No more—no more—no more—
(Such language holds the solemn sea
  To the sands upon the shore)
Shall bloom the thunder-blasted tree,
  Or the stricken eagle soar!

And all my days are trances,
  And all my nightly dreams
Are where thy dark eye glances,
  And where thy footstep gleams—
In what ethereal dances,
  By what eternal streams.

He sings not only of the earthly presence and of the sight of the far-sundered one in paradise, ever away from the light of this life, but also of a union of souls so perfect and eternal that material earth and spiritual heaven are indistinguishable and at one. From the reverential tribute "To Helen" and the rapt and constant vision of the ethereal dance and the eternal stream, he turns once more in "Annabel Lee" to a love that is more than love—more than the poor temporary physical love of earthly space and time, and belonging instead to the illimitable land of "deathless love's acclaims":

It was many and many a year ago,
In a kingdom by the sea,
That a maiden there lived whom you may know
By the name of Annabel Lee;
And this maiden she lived with no other thought
Than to love and be loved by me.

I was a child and *she* was a child,
In this kingdom by the sea:
But we loved with a love that was more than love—
I and my Annabel Lee;
With a love that the wingéd seraphs of heaven
Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,
In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
My beautiful Annabel Lee;
So that her highborn kinsmen came
And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a sepulchre
In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in heaven,
Went envying her and me—
Yes!—that was the reason (as all men know,
In this kingdom by the sea)
That the wind came out of the cloud by night,
Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love
Of those who were older than we—
Of many far wiser than we—
And neither the angels in heaven above,
Nor the demons down under the sea,
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee:

For the moon never beams, without bringing me dreams
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling,—my darling,—my life and my bride,
In her sepulchre there by the sea,
In her tomb by the side of the sea.

I have reprinted entire these familiar poems—of which the first is artistically the best and the third the most famous—so that the reader may follow them in their order of composition, and thus behold in symmetrical arrangement the three chief planes from which Poe viewed the mystery of life and death. "To Helen" dates from his earliest years, while "Annabel Lee," undoubtedly written in memory of his wife, was almost his own death-song. To claim that these three severed pieces were written as the poet's cumulative *credo* would be nonsense; but it is plain truth to assert that they form a key to Poe's chief mood of song.

This highest mood, however, was not all-prevalent. It dominates these three poems, unsurpassed in essential merit by anything he ever wrote in verse; and it dominates the tale of "Ligeia," which stands with "The Fall of the House of Usher" at the head of his prose. The will dieth not; God himself is but a great will; man by the strength of will conquers death that conquers all else. The eternity of the individual soul.

This is the answer to the riddle of Poe, and to the vaster enigma of his world. But Poe's high

It was many and many a yea ctice, in life and
In a kingdom by the se was sadly fluctuant.
That a maiden there liv well-known woes were
By the name of A
And this maiden weakness. So, too, in his
Than to lov ear and resistless assertion is
that of wailing and ineffectual
I was a
In
Bu but was too often caught by rough
winds and dashed helpless to the earth. Therefore we have poems of the storm-swept desolate grave, or even of the charnel-house; poems of melodious but utterly melancholy tears and sighs, —of a despair that veers between the shuddering thought that mayhap death is very death, and the welcome idea that the dreamless sleep of forgetfulness is best after all. And yet Poe turned again and again from the "nevermore" of "The Raven," from "the tragedy 'Man' and its hero the Conqueror Worm,"

"From Hell unto a high estate far up within the Heaven—
From grief and groan, to a golden throne, beside the King of Heaven."

Less than two hundred small pages include the poetical product of Poe. Upon his forty poems, however, rests a reputation which has slowly and steadily advanced in many lands, without successful challenge from the critics or the public, during the forty years since his death. Their obvious and at times painful limitations have by contrast displayed

The singer and his hearers.

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ncholy imagination and its romantic fancy; its metrical originality and beauty and its mastery of assonance and alliteration, have given it a place and fame, notwithstanding its lack of the moral might of the masters. Poe could not give us one of the long poems he affected to despise; he was incapable of success in the use of our noblest English measure, the iambic unrhymed pentameter or "blank verse"; and he too often forgot —though at his best he remembered—the words of a poet as great as himself and in some respects very like him:

> "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

All this, however, does not deny or diminish the legitimate pleasure with which we read the vague fantasies of "Ulalume;" the Tennysonian allegory of "The Haunted Palace;" the pallid and silent and unhuman apostrophe to "The Sleeper," environed by ghosts and shadows of No-man's-land; the obvious tone-pictures of "The Bells"; or the cadenced story of "The Raven." The commanding popularity of the last named poem, among its author's works, is due to its apt combi-

creed was better than his practice, in life and in verse. His own will was sadly fluctuant, and two-thirds of his well-known woes were born of his personal weakness. So, too, in his poems the note of clear and resistless assertion is often changed to that of wailing and ineffectual lament. The ethereal quality of his genius soared above the heart of common humanity, but was too often caught by rough winds and dashed helpless to the earth. Therefore we have poems of the storm-swept desolate grave, or even of the charnel-house; poems of melodious but utterly melancholy tears and sighs, —of a despair that veers between the shuddering thought that mayhap death is very death, and the welcome idea that the dreamless sleep of forgetfulness is best after all. And yet Poe turned again and again from the "nevermore" of "The Raven," from "the tragedy 'Man' and its hero the Conqueror Worm,"

A poet of weird woe.

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nation of things said and things suggested, of pathos and half-humorous lightness of touch, of story for the people and parable for the elect.

The originality of Poe's product explains his fame in America and in Europe. His genius and its expression were separate and individual. The peculiar type of the American mind shows itself more or less all through the national literature; but not many of our authors, like Poe, Hawthorne, Emerson, Cooper, and Whitman, stand isolated and significant. A Coleridge or Tieck may have influenced Poe or Hawthorne, as Carlyle affected Emerson and Whitman; every author learns something from his predecessors; but these five American names stand for peculiar powers in separated fields. New-world men and nature were shown to the novel-reading public in the works of Cooper; but his national tone, characteristic as it is, may be deemed less significant, in one sense, than the might of genius which makes itself independent of time and place, while freely availing itself of both. I am far from stating that these five men are of equal rank, nor do I claim that significance is the only mark of success; but it is a conspicuous and suggestive mark. These men have deeply affected their students in many lands; they have aroused the imitation of literary schools, or, like Hawthorne, have left their would-be followers in despair of learning their secret.

Poe's Originality.

Poe's originality of mind and note appears even in his poetical failures, such as the long and

dreary and often obscure "Tamerlane" and "Al Aaraaf," or the trashy verses on "Israfel," which form so absurd a contrast to the lovely text from the Koran which inspired their thought.

His cheapest jingles have a quality which is distinctly his own:

Tottering above
  In her highest noon,
  The enamored moon
Blushes with love,
  While to listen, the red levin
  (With the rapid Pleiads, even,
  Which were seven),
  Pauses in heaven.

  And never a flake
  That the vapor can make
With the moon-tints of purple and pearl,
Can vie with the modest Eulalie's most unregarded curl,
Can compare with the bright-eyed Eulalie's most humble and careless curl.

Some have left the cool glade, and
  Have slept with the bee—
Arouse them; my maiden,
  On moorland and lea.

The sickness, the nausea—
  The pitiless pain—
Have ceased, with the fever
  That maddened my brain—
With the fever called "Living"
  That burned in my brain.

And oh! of all tortures
  That torture the worst
Has abated—the terrible
  Torture of thirst,

For the naphthaline river
Of Passion accurst:—
I have drank of a water
That quenches all thirst, etc.

This is doggerel, but it is Poe's special doggerel. The ease and persistency with which he has been parodied, and the failure which has met the efforts of his more serious imitators, are sufficient proof that all his verse, in its three clearly-marked divisions of good, bad, and indifferent, is impressed with his special seal. The thought and the voice, the light and the touch, are unmistakable. "Le sue piccole ballate sono gioielli poetici, ma anche in esse domina quel *tedium vitæ*, quella malinconia insanabile, diffusa, come lume lunare, su tutte le sue creazione." *

From the small and homogeneous body of Poe's verse two poems stand clearly forth, marked with a general favor they are unlikely to lose. "The Bells" and "The Raven" are in my opinion of merit inferior to that of the trio of poems previously reprinted in this chapter. But their qualities are such as to insure lasting popularity in a world where the majority of readers prefer a lyric to an epic, and sing a song while they leave a drama unread. Poetic conciseness and unity of thought were prime articles in Poe's creed, and in these original lyrics his practice well followed his principle. The heaviest ear can follow the music of "The Bells," and the dullest mind can perceive the varied but pro-

"The Bells."

* Gustavo Strafforello, "Letteratura Americana." Milano, 1884; p. 14.

gressive suggestions of the poem; while the reader of finer tastes need not complain of any lack of refinement and beauty in the metrical and verbal workmanship. As an extended illustration of onomatopœia "The Bells," as Mr. Stoddard has said, need not fear comparison with "Alexander's Feast,"—a wonder in its day but no marvel now. As for "The Raven," it is obvious that our "Stygian American" never measured his powers more exactly than in its famous stanzas. Its variorum editor boldly declares that it "may safely be termed the most popular lyrical poem in the world." A dozen rival candidates at once occur, beginning with Gray's "Elegy;" but there need be no discussion of the wide-spread favor which the later lyric enjoys. It is "recited" by the schoolboy, and its melodious earthly despair inspired the serene heavenly contrast of the recluse Rossetti's best poem, "The Blessed Damozel." Mrs. Browning, to whom it was manifestly indebted in form and word, bore testimony to the "sensation" made in England by its gruesomeness and its melody; and its "power which is felt," to borrow her own words, has not faded with time. The genesis of the poem, as elaborately and doubtless in the main truly described by its writer, fully accounts for its mechanical excellence; while its spirit is that in which Poe chiefly lived. Its "midnight dreary" was his own most characteristic hour; and its irregular and ineffectual struggle with the inevitable was thoroughly

"The Raven."

representative of one of Poe's frequent reflections, in which he consoled himself for personal failure by the thought of the "unmerciful disaster" of destiny. But the spirit and tone of the poem were controlled rigidly, from first to last, by the intellectual force and ratiocinative grip which Poe displayed so constantly in all his literary life. Whatever the limitations of his mental powers, those powers which he possessed were used with the utmost sanity of deliberately measured strength. The best illustration of this fact is to be found in the apt introduction of humor in certain lines of "The Raven,"—a flicker which admirably deepens the shadows darkening toward the close. It is the fashion to say that humor is utterly lacking in Poe; but the statement cannot be accepted, as regards either his verse or his prose. This quality was not his strongest, but it was occasionally used with good effect in heightening the grotesque. Indeed, a romancer destitute of a sense of humor would almost be an impossibility; he must play with his subject and his readers, as Poe does here, before he permits the red glare to rise or the darkening final shadow to fall. His constructive art, like that of the painter, must ever be watched, if it would produce a result which, like "The Raven," contains within itself an element of perennial life.

"Politian."

Midway between the verse and the prose of Poe stand the "Scenes from 'Politian,' an unpublished drama," which have always been retained among the author's collected

writings. These fragments of a never-completed play have received little praise, even from the poet's most constant and all-absorbing coterie of worshippers. It may be said, however, at the least, that they do not fall below the average of the weak and unimportant contributions which America has made to the department of literature which they profess to enter. Poe's mind was essentially incapable of producing a long-sustained effort in either prose or verse; as a rule he contemptuously abstained from essays toward the "large manner," and assuredly we need not regret this fact, in view of his failures in "Al Aaraaf," "Tamerlane," "Eureka," and "Arthur Gordon Pym." What Poe would have made of "Politian," had he completed it, I do not know; the chances of success were against him. But I rank these existing fragments as the best of his three poems of more than lyrical aim. They are sometimes grandiloquent, but they mouth well, and often show more than superficial attractiveness of words, as in—

A spectral figure, solemn, and slow, and noiseless—
Like the grim shadow Conscience, solemn and noiseless;

I heard not any voice except thine own,
And the echo of thine own;

Methinks the air
Is balmier now than it was wont to be—
Rich melodies are floating in the winds—
A rarer loveliness bedecks the earth—
And with a holier lustre the quiet moon
Sitteth in Heaven.*

* Poe never learned to punctuate; and here, as elsewhere, it is an annoyance to follow the established text.

The subjective element clearly appears in the following longer extract, the spirit of which is closely accordant with that of several of the author's best lyrics,—indeed, with the dominant thought of his life:

Politian. Speak not to me of glory!
I hate—I loathe the name; I do abhor
The unsatisfactory and ideal thing.
Art thou not Lalage, and I Politian?
Do I not love—art thou not beautiful—
What need we more? Ha! glory!—now speak not of it:
By all I hold most sacred and most solemn—
By all my wishes now—my fears hereafter—
By all I scorn on earth and hope in heaven—
There is no deed I would more glory in,
Than in thy cause to scoff at this same glory
And trample it under foot. What matters it—
What matters it, my fairest, and my best,
That we go down unhonored and forgotten
Into the dust—so we descend together,
Descend together—and then—and then perchance—
Lalage. Why dost thou pause, Politian?
Politian. And then perchance
Arise together, Lalage, and roam
The starry and quiet dwellings of the blest.
And still—
Lalage. Why dost thou pause, Politian?
Politian. And still *together*—together.
Lalage. Now, Earl of Leicester!
Thou *lovest* me, and in my heart of hearts
I feel thou lovest me truly.

The prose of Poe.

Of all the prose tales of Poe the one most dear to him was "Ligeia"; and in it the reader passes naturally from one great division of the author's writings to the other. The general

theme is here unchanged; the deliberate prose has somewhat of the melody of verse; and here, as before, the living heart beats rebelliously and at last triumphantly against the bars of the dying body. The tale, according to the author's own statement in manuscript, appended to a copy in the possession of Mr. John H. Ingram,* was suggested by a dream, "in which the eyes of the heroine produced the intense effect described in the fourth paragraph of the work." Mr. Ingram aptly adds: "A theme more congenial to the dream-haunted brain of Poe could scarcely be devised; and in his exposition of the thoughts suggested by its application he has been more than usually successful. The failure of Death to annihilate Will was, indeed, a suggestion that the poet—dreadingly, despairingly, familiar as he was with charnel secrets—could not fail to grasp at with the energy of hope, and adorn with the funereal flowers of his grave-nourished fantasy." In Poe's statements concerning the powers and the place of the post-mortem soul there is at times an over-intensity of assertion that seems almost hysterical, and that is far removed from the serenity of settled faith. But

"Ligeia."

> "There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds."

There is a stolid fixity of faith that is unreflecting and unprepared for questionings; and

* Ingram's "Edgar Allan Poe: his Life, Letters, and Opinions"; i., 155. London: 1880.

there is, on the other hand, a storm-tossed incertitude that rises *per aspera ad astra*, and at length exclaims, with a confident "Eureka": "All is Life—Life—Life within Life—the less within the greater and all within the Spirit Divine." *

Poe has left on record, with his usual italicized positiveness, his views of the difference between poetry and romance. These views have interest as we turn to "Ligeia" and "The Fall of the House of Usher," his strongest stories: "A poem, in my opinion, is opposed to a work of science by having, for its *immediate* object, pleasure, not truth; to romance, by having, for its object, an *indefinite* instead of a *definite* pleasure, being a poem only so far as this object is attained; romance presenting perceptible images with definite, poetry with indefinite sensations, to which end music is an *essential*, since the comprehension of sweet sound is our most indefinite conception. Music, when combined with a pleasurable idea, is poetry; music, without the idea, is simply music; the idea, without the music, is prose, from its very definitiveness." †

Definiteness of Poe's tales.

This statement, which Poe at some other times modified or failed to observe, is obviously open to criticism in several respects. But its idea that romance should present perceptible images with definite sensations is one that Poe scrupulously observed in his best tales, such as the two just named, "The Gold Bug," "The

* "Eureka"; complete works (1884 edition), v., 150.

† Letter to B——," works, vi., 571.

Black Cat," "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," "The Mystery of Marie Roget," "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." Upon their unity of thought and painstaking vividness of impression depends their success. However improbable, unworldly, or supernatural was Poe's theme, the figures were presented with the clear-cut distinctness of a silhouette. No "realist" of the next generation was ever more zealous and fastidious in the selection and arrangement of details. As far as verisimilitude is concerned this weird and at times apparently distraught romancer stands in the company led by the author of "Robinson Crusoe" himself. The romance lay in his thought, but he well knew that a deliberate literary method, in great and in small, was needed before the reader could receive "definite sensations from perceptible images."

This method was often apparent in many details, despite Poe's great unevenness in literary style—from the choice of titles to the arrangement of concluding paragraphs. Such phrases as "The Fall of the House of Usher," "The Imp of the Perverse," "The Masque of the Red Death," "Some Words with a Mummy," "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Gold Bug," and "The Island of the Fay," arouse attention in themselves, irrespective of what follows; and remain in the memory as representatives of original and definite impressions. Less poetic, but sufficiently clever to serve the

"The Fall of the House of Usher."

purpose of apt introductions, are the more obviously readable titles of sensational stories like "MS. Found in a Bottle," or "The Unparalleled Adventures of One Hans Pfaal." Poe did not depend, however, upon titles only; sometimes an artistic tale was ill-labelled; and again so rhythmical a collection of words as "The Cask of Amontillado" formed the prelude to ten pages of sub-freshman silliness. It is pleasanter to think of Poe's full triumphs than of his weak failures. "The Fall of the House of Usher" is, in its way, a triumph of art. An intensely dramatic tale, involving both mind and matter, it employs the full powers of art to draw from dark and mysterious scenes and deeds a very definite and impressive literary picture. Language, as the chief means of intellectual impression, was so used by Poe that it imitated some of the effects of painting, of sculpture, and of wordless music.

The chief divisions of Poe's tales, natural or supernatural, are those of life battling with death; of remorseful, overwhelming tragedy; of retribution; of ratiocination; of pseudo-scientific realism; and of humor. In these divisions, "Ligeia," "The Fall of the House of Usher," "Hop-Frog," "The Gold-Bug," "The Unparalleled Adventures of One Hans Pfaal," and "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether," may be taken as representatives. The verisimilitude of the unimportant long story, "Arthur Gordon Pym," is occasionally overshadowed by Coleridgean mys-

Divisions of Poe's Tales.

tical tints; while the "prose-poem" of "Eureka" is a dream of the universe, in the waking sleep of an imaginative genius who has dabbled in science. The slight value of both—and to them may be added Poe's third long piece of prose, "The Journal of Julius Rodman"—is easily outweighed by any one of the more characteristic tales mentioned above. Dismissing also the dismally unsuccessful and ephemeral "humorous" sketches of the "X-ing a Paragrab" variety, we may study, without distraction, the qualities of that part of Poe's writings in prose which will survive the passage of years.

"Arthur Gordon Pym," "Eureka," and minor prose.

Some of those qualities are concisely made apparent by the rather obvious and natural comparison between Hawthorne and Poe, who wrote at the same great formative period in American literature. Both were original and characteristic forces, and their peculiar fields in fiction were occasionally contiguous. Hawthorne's method was deliberate and regular; Poe's, though deliberate at last, was sometimes directed by a peculiar choice. Hawthorne's humor was more gentle and constant; Poe's more extravagant and artificial. Both were realists in touch and idealists in thought, but Hawthorne's realism cared little for the mysteries of the detective, for cryptograms or purloined letters, or for semi-scientific dreams. Hawthorne's strongest stories were calm but mighty allegories of soul-triumph or spiritual suicide, of

Poe and Hawthorne.

development or destruction. Poe's, with the exception of those portraying the eternal vitality of the life-principle, were chiefly of supernatural weirdness and horror, or of unearthly beauty. The pellucid literary style of Hawthorne constantly surpassed that of Poe, save in some climax of sombre or romantic description or delineation. Hawthorne was an observer and recorder of the broadest range, possessed of imaginative genius, spiritual insight, and a sure artistic hand; his creations affect us as those of a serene master in the world of life and thought. Poe was a magician who, by the utmost effort of a powerful will, brought before us, in shadow and in sunlight, wonderful beings that were almost beyond his control:

> "Black spirits and white,
> Blue spirits and gray."

Relatively, therefore, the power and range of these stories are manifestly inferior to those exhibited in the works of Hawthorne. Absolutely, however, they stand individually forth, without conspicuous challenge in contemporary literature. Hawthorne and Poe were in no sense rivals, nor did either regard the other as a rival, or even a fellow-worker in the same field. Poe's vacillating review of Hawthorne does not disprove this statement. Indeed, they are so far apart that Coleridge himself seems to stand between them, with something of Hawthorne's humanitarianism on the one hand, and on the other something of

Poe's supernaturalism and fondness for the marvellous. Few authors gain or lose less, in comparison with others, than these two peculiar Americans, each of whom knew his powers and used them well.

It has been averred that Poe had but "a mechanical ideal, that disabled him from doing any very noble work of his own." His work was evidently not noble in vital ethical purpose; but at its best it was excellent in its adequately artistic presentation of an original and legitimate conception. This excellence hardly permits one to declare, with Tennyson, that Poe was "the greatest American genius," the literary glory of America; but it well warrants the critic in assigning him a place among the world's artists or makers. The French saying, "nothing succeeds like success," is already sufficiently applicable to the poems and tales of this favorite of the French literary public. Neither his thoughts nor his creations were of the deepest or highest type; but his feignings were those of definite genius and not of mere mechanical cleverness, of which the reading world soon tires.

Was Poe mechanical?

Poe's chief stories are "tales of the grotesque and arabesque." Their hold upon plain human life—such as that portrayed in the novels of George Eliot—is neither strong nor constant. Even in the detective riddles of "The Mystery of Marie Roget," we do not feel the power of a writer whose chief aim was

Could Poe create characters?

to delineate actual character. Poe created few men and women whose personality stands clearly forth in the reader's mind. No Don Quixote, Gil Blas, Robinson Crusoe, Colonel Newcome, Sam Weller, Adam Bede, Phœbe Pyncheon, Natty Bumppo, was added by him to the "dictionaries of noted names of fiction." With all his realism and reasoning power, he was no master in the art of characterization. Humanity is that which shapes and warms a hero or heroine in fiction; and humanity was the quality which Poe most conspicuously lacked. The lack was so complete that its absence hardly troubles us. Poe's bloodlessness is the true cause of the failure of the most of his "tales of humor," which are thin and artificial. The world of Le Sage and Goldsmith was for him a *terra incognita.* But his non-humanity, his failure in creation of characters of flesh and blood, enabled him to succeed in his own field. Destitute of sympathy, his analyses were intellectual and not spiritual. Unworldly and unheavenly, he was empowered by his very nature to introduce us to the spaceless and timeless regions of merely mental enchantment and horror. Unemotional, he was unfettered by the bonds of earth, but in tombland and ghostland he was a master. He was wise enough to endeavor to connect his work with some thought or experience of man, but of such connection he made a mere starting-point. So long as a thought or feeling was true or sufficiently obvious, he cared not how vague or unusual it might be. In the elaboration

of his ideas he willingly and often left the realm of the real, but he never dropped the central thread. This union of directness and mystery is doubtless the chief cause of his literary success. The directness is of the world of matter, and the mystery is of the world of spirit; this man so combined explicit reason with shadowy imagination that he seemed to enlarge the borders of his readers' universe.

Poe's characters and plots are spectacular and occasionally impressive, but they do not illuminate and instruct. The instability and insincerity which made the man Poe so often and so weakly fall, were closely connected with his lack of human heart and sympathy. "The mind and the heart," says Longfellow in "Hyperion," "are closely linked together, and the errors of genius bear with them their own chastisement, even upon earth." Poe's mind was large, in a way, but his heart was small; hence his personal career verged dangerously near the course of Ethan Brand. There is not much heart in his tales; their light, whether whitely clear or lurid, lacks warmth; their characters and doings, notwithstanding constant intellectual guidance, are too often, therefore, thin, pale, and limited. Poe, in his excursions through hell, purgatory, and paradise, wanders far from Dante's path. Rossetti put a flesh-and-blood woman into paradise; Poe peopled earth itself with phantoms and abstractions. In his stories, as in his poems, we cannot fail to note some influence of the personality of

Poe's mind and heart.

the writer. They are free from his positive sins, but they are strongly marked by his negative signs. On the side of the human soul not less than the human mind we are forced to perceive that Poe's field was limited and his success narrow. A Raphael could paint the heavenly in the human; Poe never learned the secret. He gave us high art and pure spirit; but could not give us high art and all-embracing soul.

The sensational and merely artificial qualities which disfigure some of Poe's poems—including "The Raven"—are in one sense less annoying in his prose. The stories which he wrote merely for effect may be divided into two classes: those of strained humor and mechanical gayety, which have dropped out of sight for lack of inherent merit; and those in which the clever ratiocination won a permanent success by sheer force of intellectual strength. His unending self-consciousness, in the latter case, actually became a merit. Conscience was not needed, nor deep spiritual sympathy; analytic reason was demanded, and in this no American author was ever stronger than Poe. He often wrote of strength of will, but his own was very weak; and most of his literary limitations may be connected with this lack of a strong, dominating individuality. But in the matter of thought and its logical processes he needs no apology or defence, personal or literary. His mental integrity—if I may coin a phrase—was high. All charges of literary dishonesty may be dismissed from his case.

Analytic power.

He wrote hack work, at times valueless; but its worthlessness was not due to lack of expenditure of such intellectual resources as were at hand. He who wasted weeks in deciphering newspaper correspondents' cryptograms, when time was money, was a conscientious workman in that part of his mind which was uninvaded by his folly or weakness.

Conciseness and neatness of literary workmanship, from method down to word, were to be expected from a mind constituted as was his. He is always verbally intelligible, however remote or unfamiliar his theme. Clearness in rhetoric is a first pre-requisite of force, and by its almost invariable use Poe secured its natural result. "The Purloined Letter," or "The Gold Bug," is as straightforward as Webster's description of the White murder at Salem. They represent a class of stories in which a whole school of lesser novelists has imitated Poe, but has for the most part failed, through the carelessness which is born of over-sympathy. Poe "hitched his wagon to a star"—the Black Maria of the detective story to the cold star of intellectual insight. Strange to say, he was enabled to carry this clearness of exposition all the way from such obvious stories as "The Oblong Box," or "The Premature Burial," which any magazinist could have written, up to "Ligeia" and "The Fall of the House of Usher." It failed him only when he undertook to portray the great mysteries of the spiritual universe, for the

Clearness of speech.

reason that mere intellectual insight is insufficient for the reading of the riddle. Poe was right when he announced that deduction, or poetic thought, was the proper starting point in many great movements; but his failure—as in "Eureka"—was in the quality of the thought required. He could not use a key which he did not possess.

Poe's product the best he could offer.

There is a numerous class of readers delighting in speculations concerning the unfulfilled possibilities of literature. What if Keats had lived? what if Byron and Burns had been temperate in life-habits? what if Poe had not given way to temptations which formerly limited the earthly career of genius to a period far shorter than that of the Tennysons and Longfellows of to-day? The might-have-been is a subject for guess-work more entertaining than valuable. In Poe's case its value is reduced to its lowest terms. His clearness, directness, and force in literature, as I said at the start, apparently suffered little from his personal irregularities, and even from the hack-work necessities of his life. Poe, though he earned his living by his pen at a time when sentimentalism was better paid than genius, refused to stoop below, nor could he rise above, the plane he had chosen, wisely or unwisely. Seldom, in the history of literature, can we say so confidently that the work adequately represents the man. Poe needs no apologies or extenuations, which his proud nature

would have been the first to scorn. His field was his own; his triumphs were those won by his genius, and his failures were natural and deliberate, not the result of intemperance, accident, or fate. Many of his poems were revised again and again, and the revision always moved toward the style which is most characteristic of the author.

The obedience with which Poe's pen obeyed his mind is well displayed in "William Wilson," a story, which, though comparatively neglected by his readers, possesses a significance peculiar to itself. It is partly autobiographical; it vividly describes the buildings and environment of the school at Stoke Newington, England, in which some of Poe's boyhood days were spent; and, in later pages, it unquestionably contains a personal element. Its theme is perennial: the struggle between good and bad in one man; between conscience and the self-destroying principle of sin. Neither of the two William Wilsons—he of the echoing whisper, the haunting presence in sin or danger, and the solemn monitions; and he of the heedless and selfish downward way—is lightly to be declared the real Poe, for the tale is, of course, dramatic. But it is impossible not to read this deeply religious allegory without feeling that nowhere else do we come so near the real man. The author of "William Wilson" must have seen at times the Dantean and Miltonic vision of mighty right and hideous wrong, and must have possessed in his own soul

"William Wilson."

the power of that ultimate rectification which heeds the voice from the Paradiso and not the Inferno.

A few of Poe's productions in prose were written with an idea of the prose-poem in the author's mind. Not content with the music of verse or with occasional careful presentations of euphonic phrases in his better stories, he essayed occasionally the art of deliberately melodious utterance in prose. By the choice of a single isolated thought or a significantly romantic theme, and by the use of that archaic English which is instinctively connected with the attempt of prose to express the ideal, he sought to secure results which would have attracted more notice had they been more numerous or sustained. As it is, they occasionally produce effects not essentially different from those which follow the reading of parts of the best of the poems and stories; but since their central ideas are less potent in their grasp upon the reader's mind, they are little heeded by the majority of Poe's public. Weird music, interpreting thoughts of the ethereal or the horrible, is so frequently heard from Poe's hand that it ceases to be novel in pieces which would arouse interest if more exceptional in tone. They are similar to the author's other work, and not strong enough to command a place for themselves. The brief study entitled "Silence, a Fable," however, is at least worth a deliberate reading:

Prose-poems.

"Silence; a Fable."

"'Listen to *me*,' said the Demon, as he placed his hand upon my head. 'The region of which I speak is a dreary region in Libya, by the borders of the river Zäire, and there is no quiet there, nor silence.

"'The waters of the river have a saffron and sickly hue; and they flow not onward to the sea, but palpitate forever and forever beneath the red eye of the sun with a tumultuous and convulsive motion. For many miles on either side of the river's oozy bed is a pale desert of gigantic water-lilies. They sigh one unto the other, in that solitude, and stretch toward the heavens their long and ghastly necks, and nod to and fro their everlasting heads. And there is an indistinct murmur which cometh out from among them like the rushing of subterrene water. And they sigh one unto the other.

"'But there is a boundary to their realm—the boundary of the dark, horrible, lofty forest. There, like the waves about the Hebrides, the low underwood is agitated continually. But there is no wind throughout the heaven. And the tall, primeval trees rock eternally hither and thither with a crashing and mighty sound. And from their high summits, one by one, drop everlasting dews. And at the roots strange poisonous flowers lie writhing in perturbed slumber. And overhead, with a rustling and loud noise, the gray clouds rush westwardly forever, until they roll, a cataract, over the fiery wall of the horizon. But there is no wind throughout the heaven. And by the shores of the river Zäire there is neither quiet nor silence.

"'It was night, and the rain fell; and, falling, it was rain, but, having fallen, it was blood. And I stood in the morass among the tall lilies, and the rain fell upon my head—and the lilies sighed one unto the other in the solemnity of their desolation.

"'And, all at once, the moon arose through the thin ghastly mist, and was crimson in color. And mine eyes fell upon a huge gray rock which stood by the shore of the river, and was lighted by the light of the moon. And the rock was gray, and ghastly, and tall,—and the rock was gray. Upon its front were characters engraven in the stone; and I walked through the morass of water-lilies, until I came close unto the shore, that I might read the characters upon the stone. But I could not decipher them. And I was going back into the morass, when the moon shone with a fuller red, and I turned and looked again upon the rock, and upon the characters; and the characters were DESOLATION.

"'And I looked upward, and there stood a man upon the summit of the rock; and I hid myself among the water-lilies that I might discover the actions of the man. And the man was tall and stately in form, and was wrapped up from his shoulders to his feet in the toga of old Rome. And the outlines of his figure were indistinct—but his features were the features of a deity; for the mantle of the night, and of the mist, and of the moon, and of the dew, had left uncovered the features of his face. And his brow was lofty with thought, and his eye wild with care; and in the few furrows upon his cheek I read the fables of sorrow, and weariness, and disgust with mankind, and a longing after solitude.

"'And the man sat upon a rock, and leaned his head upon his hand, and looked out upon the desolation. He looked down into the low unquiet shrubbery, and up into the tall primeval trees, and up higher at the rustling heaven, and into the crimson moon. And I lay close within shelter of the lilies, and observed the actions of the man. And the man trembled in the solitude;—but the night waned, and he sat upon the rock.

"'And the man turned his attention from the heaven, and looked out upon the dreary river Zäire, and upon the yellow ghastly waters, and upon the pale legions of the water-lilies. And the man listened to the sighs of the water-lilies, and to the murmur that came up from among them. And I lay close within my covert and observed the actions of the man. And the man trembled in the solitude;—but the night waned, and he sat upon the rock.

"'Then I went down into the recesses of the morass and waded afar in among the wilderness of lilies, and called upon the hippopotami which dwelt among the fens in the recesses of the morass. And the hippopotami heard my call, and came, with the behemoth, unto the foot of the rock, and roared loudly and fearfully beneath the moon. And I lay close within my covert and observed the actions of the man. And the man trembled in the solitude;—but the night waned, and he sat upon the rock.

"'Then I cursed the elements with the curse of tumult; and a frightful tempest gathered in the heaven, where before there had been no wind. And the heaven became livid with the vio

lence of the tempest—and the rain beat upon the head of the man—and the flood of the river came down—and the river was tormented into foam—and the water-lilies shrieked within their beds—and the forest crumbled before the wind—and the thunder rolled—and the lightning fell—and the rock rocked to its foundation. And I lay close within my covert and observed the actions of the man. And the man trembled in the solitude; —but the night waned, and he sat upon the rock.

"Then I grew angry, and cursed with the curse of *silence*, the river, and the lilies, and the wind, and the forest, and the heavens, and the thunder, and the sighs of the water-lilies, And they became accursed and *were still.* And the moon ceased to totter up its pathway to heaven—and the thunder died away—and the lightning did not flash—and the clouds hung motionless—and the waters sunk to their level and remained—and the trees ceased to rock—and the water-lilies sighed no more—and the murmur was heard no longer among them, nor any shadow of sound throughout the vast illimitable desert. And I looked upon the characters of the rock, and they were changed, and the characters were SILENCE.

"'And mine eyes fell upon the countenance of the man, and his countenance was wan with terror. And hurriedly, he raised his head from his hand, and stood forth upon the rock and listened. But there was no voice throughout the vast illimitable desert, and the characters upon the rocks were SILENCE. And the man shuddered, and turned his face away, and fled afar off, in haste, so that I beheld him no more."

* * * * * * *

"Now there are fine tales in the volumes of the Magi—in the iron-bound, melancholy volumes of the Magi. Therein, I say, are glorious histories of the Heaven, and of the Earth, and of the mighty sea—and of the genii that overruled the sea, and the Earth, and the lofty Heaven. There was much lore too in the sayings which were said by the sibyls; and holy, holy things were heard of old by the dim leaves that trembled round Dodona—but, as Allah liveth, that fable which the Demon told me as he sat by my side in the shadow of the tomb, I hold to be the most wonderful of all! And as the Demon made an

end of his story, he fell back within the cavity of the tomb and laughed. And I could not laugh with the Demon, and he cursed me because I could not laugh. And the lynx which dwelleth forever in the tomb, came out therefrom, and lay down at the feet of the Demon, and looked at him steadily in the face."

This ambitious sketch is the best example of Poe's deliberate picture-writing, and on the whole it must be called thin and artificial. The quality of artificiality is the bane that poisons much of his work. Where his conceptions were at once original and within the scope of his mental powers, they were presented with an art that will live; where he sought to startle or impress by useless incantations he very naturally and speedily failed. It is easy to imagine how De Quincey or Hawthorne would have written "Silence," and it would not have been in this thin and impoverished style, with its multiplicity of "ands" and its downright carelessness where art should have been flawless. "And the hippopotami heard my call, and came, with the behemoth, unto the foot of the rock, and roared loudly and fearfully beneath the moon." That is, the hippopotami came with the hippopotamus and so managed their snorting and blowing as to produce a loud and fearful roar. This is not the only production of Poe in which he seems like a sublimated sophomore.

Time has done much, within the space of the forty years that have elapsed since the poet's death, to correct misjudgments concerning Poe's

life and work. The mass of writing concerning him—critical, laudatory, or denunciatory—has not been exceeded in the case of any other American writer. At the one extreme of opinion is the curt and contemptuous statement that his writings, if now freshly offered to the public of readers, would not attract serious attention. At the other are such words as M. Jules Lemaitre (in his "Dialogue des Morts, a propos de la préface du 'Prétre de Nemi'" *) puts into the poet's mouth:

Time and Poe.

"*Edgard Poe.*—Vous dites bien. J'ai vecu vingt-trois siècles après Platon et trois cents ans après Shakespeare, à quelque douze cents lieues de Londres et à quelque deux milles lieues d'Athenes, dans un continent que nul ne connaissait au temps de Platon. J'ai été un malade et un fou; j'ai éprouvé plus que personne avant moi la terreur de l'inconnu, du noir, du mystérieux, de l'inexpliqué. J'ai été le poète des hallucinations et des vertigues; j'ai été le poète de la Peur. J'ai développé dans un style précis et froid la logique secrète des folies, et j'ai exprimé des etats de conscience que l'auteur d'*Hamlet* lui-meme n'a pressenti que deux ou trois fois. Peut-être aurait-on raison de dire que je différe moins de Shakespeare que de Platon: mais il reste vrai que nous presentons trois exemplaires de l'especе humaine aussi dissemblables que possible."

Plato, Shakespeare and Poe!—is our bard, luckless in life, to go down the ages in such company as this, gravely weighed and compared with the very masters of the human mind? Is he absolutely matchless in his delineations of the terror that lurks in the shade of the soul's mysterious

* *Les Lettres et les Arts*, Janvier, 1886.

night-time? Not so, the French admirers of his genius, misled by the intensity of a taste national rather than catholic, would give to the clever magician honors belonging to the profound philosopher. Poe is absolute master only of the young or the superficially impressionable. He cannot affect our whole lives as does a Hawthorne in prose, nor can his eye sweep from zenith to nadir in the poetic vision of Emerson. His realm of heaven-lit night is narrow, and his rule is that of a noble and not of a king; but realm and rule will endure.

CHAPTER V.

EMERSON AS POET.

THE literary history of past centuries, in many lands, shows to us numerous prose-writers who have written verse, and not a few poets whose prose letters, journals, or weightier works have been treasured up. Prose is the natural utterance of the mind; therefore it falls from poets' lips or pens; poetry is the highest form of literature, therefore it is essayed by those who write chiefly in prose. But not until the nineteenth century have authors of eminence written in prose and in verse almost indifferently, and with nicely balanced success. The greater poets of contemporary England, indeed, still write verse alone. The tendency of the time, however, is to make the man of letters seek many modes of expression, and try varied forms of work. In America, with much to say and to do, with the pressure of newness ever making itself felt upon the mind, most poets write prose at wish or at need, and eminent prose-writers are not guiltless of "iambs and pentameters." Longfellow gave us a sentimental romance, an idyllic novelette, and some good criticisms; the young Whittier was biographer, essayist, or historical novelist; Bryant was traveller and commemorative orator, and in his

Poetry and Prose.

youth could spin a fair tale in prose; Poe's high continental renown is based upon his tales as truly as upon his poems; Holmes the Autocrat, and Professor, and novelist, shares honor with Holmes the poet of "The Last Leaf" and "The Deacon's Masterpiece"; and Lowell, in the time devoted to criticism of others, has stolen that which would have enhanced his standing in the muses' court.

The prose of Longfellow, Whittier, and Bryant will pass out of sight; and prose *or* verse rather than prose *and* verse, will finally be preferred by the test of time in other cases. In the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, however, they need not be and cannot be separated in final verdict or present estimate. Emerson was a seer and utterer; a great mind looking out upon the universe, and telling the world what he saw and thought. His words were spoken in prose or poetry as seemed to him fit; but the purpose and the general plan were ever the same. There is no intrinsic reason why his prose and verse should be considered in separate chapters. Their treatment in different volumes of this history forms, I believe, the only notable exception to the general desirability of the plan of the work, whereby, in symmetrical progress, the two great divisions of non-imaginative and imaginative American writings are viewed without vexatious interruption. Even in Emerson's case, however, the changed point of view—as in looking at Canterbury Cathedral—but illustrates the variant unity of a great intellectual product.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1803–1882.

The poetry of Emerson occupies a peculiar position. It is obedient, as a rule, to the canons of poetic art; much of it is highly lyrical and of exquisite finish; but on the whole it is simply to be considered as a medium for the expression of thought which could not so concisely be uttered in prose. When Emerson wished to speak with peculiar terseness, with unusual exaltation, with special depth of meaning, with the utmost intensity of conviction, he spoke in poetic form. He who misses this fact cannot rightly interpret Emerson the poet.

Emerson's Poetic Theme.

His themes are of the highest that can engage the singer's or the sayer's attention. The collected body of his verse, in the final edition, is but a single volume of moderate size; but within those three hundred pages how much is packed! Emerson stands on our earth in the middle years of the nineteenth century, and looks about him. He peers into the past of Greece and Rome, of Palestine and Egypt, and of remoter India. He studies minutely the woods, and waters, and birds, and beasts, and men and women of his town and neighborhood. He gazes upward to the stars of heaven and downward to the central fires. He stands by the bed of sickness and the open grave, and peers beyond to the hereafter of the soul. In all he is the optimist rather than the pessimist, the philosopher, not the mere bystander. Idealism appears to him a thing lovely and of eternal truth; materialism hateful, and to die with the perishing matter

from which it sprung. Above and in all, for him, is the spiritual meaning and mission of nature to the individual soul. For that soul the whole universe is the ethical teacher.

His Method and Limitations.

For the reasons stated, one would expect to find the poetry of Emerson irregular, unconventional, at times careless. Emerson was too much an artist to neglect the artistic element, but it is invariably made subordinate. Clear expression of high thought is his perpetual desire. His very wish to be terse sometimes makes him obscure, and oftener causes him to seem obscure. In this respect, as in some others, there is a parallel between Emerson and Browning. The two poets, with manifold differences of mind and of method, are at one in their broad view of life's mysteries and duties, and of the poet's relation to God and to man. Both are unpopular among the multitude, and beloved by the few to whom they are masters and benefactors. Emerson could not be, like Browning at times, a stirring lyrical poet of battle and of the fire of life, but he could be sweetly melodious, charming his readers and hearers by the form and expression of his song. Not a constructive dramatist, Emerson had the dramatic instinct in so far that he could put himself in the stead of others, and imagine himself in a "far or forgot" place and time. As a poet, he sung when he must or would, not merely when he should or could. Emerson, in his last years, declared that Longfellow wrote too much; Longfellow might have

retorted that Emerson wrote too little. In Longfellow, true poet though he was, art sometimes usurped the place of genius; in Emerson, genius too often refused the needed aid of art. Emerson could write a poem "round and perfect as a star," or set "jewels five words long" in immortal verse; but, like Wordsworth, he sometimes strayed into the regions of the ridiculous. His devotion to poetic art increased toward the close of his life; his later poems show a gain in form and finish, and he left behind him unpublished pieces surpassing not a few of those printed in his first book of verse. On the whole, however, there is a certain impression left upon the minds of the readers of Emerson's verse which, for lack of a better expression, may be described by the word fragmentary. It should by no means be implied that his poems are mere broken bits of genius, or imperfect indications of the irregular powers of an idle or self-destructive mind. The mere supposition would be absurd. An English critic has said of Coleridge, as poet: "all that he did excellently might be bound up in twenty pages, but it should be bound in pure gold." The poems of Emerson are golden leaves which do not need to be bound separately from his prose essays, of which they are the companion and interpreter. Whatever fragmentary character they may have is due not to failure or incompleteness, but to the fact that Emerson was, in a true sense, a sort of oracular philosopher and prophet; and philosophers and prophets do not feel bound to produce

epics in twelve books, or dramas in five acts, or even blank verse poems, fifty pages long. When Emerson had said his say in verse, he stopped. His poems are more artistic, of course, than his essays; more than the essays, they have their fixed beginnings, progress and end; verse, in Emerson's mind, was the finest condensation of thought and utterance. That rigid and austere governance of English verse which Gray got from classic study, Emerson derived, when he wished, from the nature of his own mind. Even in his poems that apparently run rapidly on, each line is packed with thought—packed so closely, sometimes, that the wise reader cannot discover what the poet meant to say.

The poetry of Emerson is by no means that of a mere preacher. In a previous criticism I once said of him: "Both in poetry and in prose his influence is as spontaneous as that of nature: he announces, and lets others plead." I may be permitted to repeat the statement, for convenience' sake, because I cannot better claim for him the character and work of the true poet. Keats himself, in his world-famous line, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever," did not more loyally or more fitly describe nature's and poetry's self-existent loveliness than did Emerson in his poem, "The Rhodora: On being asked, Whence is the Flower?"

His Spontaneity.

"The Rhodora."

In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,
I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,
Spreading its leafless bloom in a damp nook,
To please the desert and the sluggish brook.

The purple petals, fallen in the pool,
Made the black water with their beauty gay;
Here might the red bird come his plumes to cool,
And court the flower that cheapens his array.
Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why
This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
Tell them, dear, that if eyes were made for seeing,
Then Beauty is its own excuse for being:
Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!
I never thought to ask, I never knew;
But in my simple ignorance, suppose
The self-same power that brought me there brought you.

This is the poet's *credo*, and it could hardly be better stated. It is not heartless "art for art's sake," nor does it try to make poetry "turn the crank of an opinion-mill." The poet sings because he must, for very joyance, and for the sharing of nature's beauty. But nature, in Emerson's verse, is something more than mere prettiness; it is now a mirror of mind, now a spiritual parable, now a revelation of the supernal goodness of the All-maker. Thus viewed, nature becomes an inspiration unknown to the materialist, on the one hand, or the sour moralizer over a "lost world," on the other. Emerson's poetry of nature has the broadest range, from noon-day sky to swampy pool, from snow-capped mountain to skipping squirrel on the tree:

For Nature beats in perfect tune,
And rounds with rhyme her every rune,
Whether she work in land or sea,
Or hide underground her alchemy.
Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,
Or dip thy paddle in the lake,

> But it carves the bow of beauty there,
> And the ripples in rhymes the oar forsake.
> The wood and wave each other know.
> Not unrelated, unaffied,
> But to each thought and thing allied,
> Is perfect Nature's every part,
> Rooted in the mighty Heart.

Emerson's general reputation as a writer dates from the publication of his essay on "Nature," which slowly worked its way into fame. The circumstance was no accident, for the material world, as the background—or, more properly, the companion and friend—of the intellectual and spiritual, is never long lost to sight in the prose pages of Emerson. In his verse it is equally important; it would be as just to call Emerson the poet of nature as to apply the familiar phrase to Bryant. Nature-poetry made great progress between the time of Thomson and that of Shelley and Wordsworth. It would be idle and valueless to institute a comparison between poets as unlike as Wordsworth and Emerson; for the originality of the latter is unquestionable. In external form Shelley's "Life of life, thy lips enkindle" lyric in "Prometheus Unbound," which Mr. Palgrave, in his "Golden Treasury," entitles a "Hymn to the Spirit of Nature," is far from the Emersonian type; but Shelley and Emerson were not dissimilar in their rapt devotion to the beauty and all-pervading charm of the external world. Both were called pantheists, at one time or another; and the Englishman and the Ameri-

A poet of nature.

reproduced, in various forms, certain Greek
ceptions and expressions. The old truths,
ient as the world and fresh as the new dawn,
given a nineteenth-century application in
ıy of Emerson's lines; take, for instance, a few
ızas from "The World Soul":

For Destiny never swerves,
Nor yields to men the helm;
He shoots his thought, by hidden nerves,
Throughout the solid realm.
The patient Dæmon sits,
With roses and a shroud;
He has his way, and deals his gifts,—
But ours is not allowed. . . . . .

When the old world is sterile,
And the ages are effete,
He will from wrecks and sediment
The fairer world complete.
He forbids to despair;
His cheeks mantle with mirth;
And the unimagined good of men
Is yeaning at the birth.

Spring still makes spring in the mind
When sixty years are told;
Love wakes anew this throbbing heart,
And we are never old.
Over the winter glaciers
I see the summer glow,
And through the wild-piled snowdrift
The warm rosebuds below.

'arts of these stanzas, and other parts of the
ıe poem, suggest at once the relations between

Emerson's poetic thought and poetic expression. In the latter, we sometimes find art, sometimes artlessness, sometimes deliberate crudity. A Tennyson or a Longfellow would not have permitted some of the lines just quoted to pass without artistic revision. Not even Wordsworth pressed so dangerously near as did Emerson at times, the borderland of what is bald, or juvenile, or apparently silly. The third and fourth stanzas of Emerson's poem on "Tact" (dropped from the final edition) are sorry doggerel:

Thought and expression.

> The maiden in danger
> Was saved by the swain;
> His stout arm restored her
> To Broadway again.
>
> The maid would reward him,—
> Gay company come,—
> They laugh, she laughs with them;
> He is moonstruck and dumb.

This is on the artistic level of Wordsworth's

> "Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,"

or that estimable stanza of the same pious poet:

> "'And now, as fitting is and right,
> We in the church our faith will plight,
> A husband and a wife;'
> Even so they did; and I may say
> That to sweet Ruth that happy day
> Was more than human life."

Wordsworth, in his revolt against eighteenth century academic poetry, went far toward the

absurdity of over simplicity; just as the pre-Raphaelite English poets and painters, half a century later, carried their rebellion against formalism so far that there could be found no stiffer formalists than themselves. This is an old story, in literary, artistic, political, and religious revivals.

Emerson's rawness and roughness were not due to the fact that he was trying to break down one school, or set up another. They resulted from his ever-present idea of the commanding importance of the thought, and the insignificance and relative unimportance of the means of expression. But Emerson, like Wordsworth before him and Browning beside him, was deliberate in his poetic utterance. If not always artistic in form, it was because he did not choose to be. Flat, and foolish, and egotistic as Wordsworth seems at times, he was the poet who sang to us of "faith become a passionate intuition;" of a violet

> "Fair as a star when only one
> Is shining in the sky;"

of

> "The light that never was on sea or land,
> The consecration, and the poet's dream."

The bard of "Peter Bell" was also the bard of the "Ode on Immortality" and the sonnet on sleeping London. So, too, whatever flaws we find in Emerson's verse, we also find such lordly and lovely lines as

> "Earth proudly wears the Parthenon
> As the best gem upon her zone."

lines that in themselves are a gem of poetry. Wordsworth hardly seemed to know when he was on the mountain-tops of art, and when in the valleys; but Emerson would measure his every mood and mental state. Said he:

> "But in the mud and scum of things
> There alway, alway something sings;"

and that song in his catholic ear was as sacred as the song of the spheres. He was deliberate in his noblest lines and most polished poems; he was no less deliberate in his quaintest, most irregular, and cacophonous verses. The poetry of Emerson must be taken as it is. Its writer had the power, when he chose, to give it all needed adornment of art; he also had the will, when he deemed it necessary, to utter his thought in the baldest form. With him the *must* was more potent than the *may;* he cared more for the *why* than for the *how.*

We thus can see and understand the position of the poetry of Emerson in the literature of his country and his time. It is more truthful to call him a great man who wrote poems, than to call him a great poet. It seems to me essential to remember this definition, that we may avoid errors in either direction. His poetry at its best reaches heights which Longfellow or Bryant could not attain. Its august purpose renders comparison with the verse of Poe utterly out of the question. Emerson was a greater man than any one of these three; and once in a while he

wrote lines as artistic as Longfellow's, as stately as Bryant's, as melodiously beautiful as Poe's. He was more than an eminent prose writer who produced verse. His poetry would give him a high reputation were his prose blotted out. And yet his prose overshadows his verse; his character as literary force seems higher than his rank as poet. His three hundred pages of poems, read them and praise them and revere them as we will, but restate concisely the message of his essays. So long as this result was chosen by Emerson himself, his readers may well accept it without regrets or attempts at denial. He wrote, as one of his fragments tells us,

> "For thought, and not praise;
> Thought is the wages
> For which I sell days,
> Will gladly sell ages,
> And willing grow old,
> Deaf and dumb and blind and cold."

Though Emerson conscientiously wrote "for thought and not praise," from the beginning of his career to its close, he could in a limited but true sense be called a popular author, even before his death. Not one word in his lectures or essays was apparently written with popularity in view, yet he slowly climbed to the sure height of a deserved renown based on high achievement. I do not mean, of course, that he ever found half as many readers as the contemporary novelists of a day, whose

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methods and movements the newspapers think so important; but he found a public of thoughtful, studious, benefited, and sometimes raptly enthusiastic readers, which could both relatively and absolutely be called a large public. But these readers were affected by his prose more than by his verse, in the mathematical ratio in which the quantity of his prose exceeds that of his verse. In Emerson's lifetime appeared two volumes of poems, and one book of selections from the two. After his death was published a complete edition, with previously uncollected fragments. These collections had a circulation small beside that of the books of any other American poet of equal standing. This fact could not have been due to the obscurity of Emerson's poems as a whole, for some are "sun-clear"; nor to the remoteness of their themes, for some treat of the simplest and nearest emotions or natural objects; nor to their small bulk, which was greater than that of Gray's or Poe's poetry. Its cause, as I have said, is that Emerson delivered his one message in many forms, not all of which were designed for all hearers and readers.

Emerson and the Greater Poets.

All the great poets of the world have been great poetical artists. In Homer, Sophocles, Virgil, Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, we find not only the power of thinking grandly and freshly, but also of constructing nobly and decorating beautifully. Not many can endure a comparison with these great makers of the world's verse; but if we pass to the list of

poets of the lesser order,—to Sappho, Horace, Petrarch, Heine, Gray, Wordsworth,—we discover a similar union of the internal with the external, so that both make a poetic whole. Those who aver that great nuggets of unpolished poetic thought are to be accepted as readily as "Hamlet," the odes of Sappho and Horace, Gray's "Elegy," or Wordsworth's best sonnets, must revise the entire intellectual and artistic history of the world. It is perfectly true that

> "Thought is deeper than all speech,
> Feeling deeper than all thought,"

but it is equally true that wisdom must be married to immortal verse before it can pretend to be immortal poetry. Feeling that cannot express itself in formulated thought, thought that cannot embody itself in fit speech, speech that cannot be framed according to the noblest verbal art, may be true and valuable, but are not poetry. We do not propose to revise the artistic canons of all literary history for the benefit of those who aver that the poet need only throw before us a mass of jewels and dirt, leaving to us the cleansing and polishing of the occasional glittering stones. Emerson makes for the poet no such claim as this. When he gives us plain, compact instructions or reflections he pretends to do no more. When he gives us deep thought in artistic form, then and then only does he tacitly rank himself among the poets. Sometimes he does the one, sometimes the other. There is enough of his verse of the

latter kind to entitle him to the name of poet in the usual limited sense. Art and form, lovely and self-contained, find their place in not a few of his poems. When he courted the muse she smiled upon him; when he turned his back upon her he made no pretence of standing in her favor.

Evenness of Emerson's Work.

It may at first seem a paradox to say that the quality of evenness marks the poetry of Emerson. No American writer of verse more freely followed his will, in the choice and treatment of subjects. But there is no essential difference between his earliest verse and his latest. The chronological order, so important in studying the writings of some poets, is almost valueless in the case of Emerson. We know that certain of his poems were produced in his youth, and others in his maturity or old age. Some were written for occasions, or were drawn forth by that great civil war which threw its shadows across the seventh decade of the sage's life. But this knowledge is interesting, rather than essential, in the particular instance, and not valuable in the general estimate. In one of the stanzas just quoted Emerson reminds us that

> "Spring still makes spring in the mind
> When sixty years are told."

The noble lines are worth repeating. No modern writer more clearly shows the truth that immortal existence is an eternal now, notwithstanding the correlated law of beginnings and developments. Not even the fact that the man Emerson outlived

his mental powers can blind us to the perception that the mind Emerson was of perennial freshness, youthful and mature at once. This statement is no idle compliment, in words that have lost their meaning; it goes to explain the poet's apprehension of remote India on the one hand and modern Massachusetts on the other. He was as old as the mystic Brahman and as young as a Middlesex stripling. His heart and thought included the Hindoo seer and the Concord farmer. Who but he would write as the first line of a poem bearing the far-off and ancient title, "Hamatreya," such a rugged list of contemporary American surnames as

"Minott, Lee, Willard, Hosmer. Meriam, Flint"?

But in such apparent eccentricity and roughness he was not careless but deliberate. Here, and in a hundred other instances, he was stating hoary truth in the every-day language of his neighbors. He frankly said:

"What all the books of ages paint, I have."

In poetry, as in prose, Emerson prepared his bits of material when he would, and afterward elaborated them into symmetrical wholes, at leisure or on the fit occasion. Some of these bits, never elaborated, but printed posthumously as mere "Fragments on the Poet and the Poetic Gift," are in themselves better than many poems which have cost their authors

"Long days of labor
And nights devoid of ease."

Indeed, we have no reason to doubt that, in some true sense, Emerson labored long on such fine though fragmentary work as many of these incomplete poems or parts of poems. Let us read some of them at random, without classification, just as they were apparently written, and without trying to give them titles or explanations which they lack but do not need:

That book is good
Which puts me in a working mood.

Unless to thought is added will,
Apollo is an imbecile.

What parts, what gems, what colors shine,—
Ah, but I miss the grand design.

Forebore the ant-hill, shunned to tread,
In mercy, on one little head.

The brook sings on, but sings in vain,
Wanting the echo in my brain.

On bravely through the sunshine and the showers!
Time hath its work to do and we have ours.

Thou shalt not try
To plant thy shrivelled pedantry
On the shoulders of the sky.

Teach me your mood, O patient stars!
Who climb each night the ancient sky,
Leaving on space no shade, no scars,
No trace of age, no fear to die.

If bright the sun, he tarries,
All day his song is heard;
And when he goes, he carries
No more baggage than a bird.

But Nature whistled with all her winds,
Did as she pleased and went her way.

The passing moment is an edifice
Which the omnipotent cannot rebuild.

Tell men what they knew before;
Paint the prospect from their door.

From such fragments as these, quoted as left in Emerson's manuscript and printed by his literary executor after his death, there is no long step to the finish and completeness of his stately poem entitled "Days:"

Daughters of Time, the hypocritic days,
Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,
And marching single in an endless file,
Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.
To each they offer gifts after his will,
Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all.
I, in my pleachéd garden, watched the pomp,
Forgot my morning wishes, hastily
Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day
Turned and departed silent. I, too late,
Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn.

This posthumously published quatrain is in its way as complete as an epic:

Go, if thou wilt, ambrosial flower,
  Go match thee with thy seeming peers;
I will wait Heaven's perfect hour
  Through the innumerable years.

The thoughts and wordings of the last pages of Emerson's volume of poems send the reader's mind wandering back through the centuries, from Walter Savage Landor to the Greek anthology.

Emerson, never a deep classicist, was sometimes half Greek in his way of looking at things, and also in his way of wording his thought. The statement seems either an exaggeration or a platitude, but I know not how to express my meaning in other language.

His conciseness.

The compactness of Emerson's writing, whether in prose or in verse, is apparent to the most careless reader. The quatrain I have just quoted, "Teach me your mood, O patient stars", really includes the thought and the lesson of the eight stanzas comprising one of Matthew Arnold's best known poems, that beginning:

> "Weary of myself, and sick of asking
> What I am, and what I ought to be,
> At this vessel's prow I stand, which bears me
> Forward, forward, o'er the starlit sea."

Emerson's four lines surpass, I think, the best four lines of Arnold's thirty-two, which are:

> "From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of Heaven,
> Over the lit sea's unquiet way,
> In the rustling night-air came the answer:
> 'Wouldst thou *be* as these are? *Live* as they.'"

The superiority extends not only to the quatrain as compared with the poem, but to the choice of particular epithets and phrases. One of Mrs. Browning's best sonnets,

> "'O dreary life!' we cry, 'O dreary life,'"

has the same theme and general method; and though it comes nearer Emerson's felicity, with

"* * the unwasted stars that pass
In their old glory,"

it does not surpass that felicity. Mrs. Browning's thought was sometimes fused and compacted by the fires of intense feeling, but Emerson's was made concise by calm and cold selection. Yet his calm is not the calm of Arnold, himself sometimes as diffuse as Mrs. Browning; but that of one who will not speak or sing at all until the urgency of his poetic desire is joined with the sense of fitness of poetic expression. This statement applies even to the queerest and most rapidly moving of Emerson's metres. Aside from the question of the value of his poems, we cannot deny that they were the best he could write. The apt union of words and thought in "The Snow-Storm" is as good a proof of this proposition as can be found: "The Snow-Storm."

Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,
Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,
Seems nowhere to alight: the whited air
Hides hills and woods, the river, and the heaven,
And veils the farmhouse at the garden's end.
The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's feet
Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit
Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed
In a tumultuous privacy of storm.

Come see the north wind's masonry.
Out of an unseen quarry evermore
Furnished with tile, the fierce artificer
Curves his white bastions with projected roof
Round every winded stake, or tree, or door.
Speeding, the myriad-handed, his wild work

So fanciful, so savage, naught cares he
For number or proportion. Mockingly,
On coop or kennel he hangs Parian wreaths,
A swan-like form invests the hidden thorn;
Fills up the farmer's lane from wall to wall,
Maugre the farmer's sighs; and, at the gate,
A tapering turret overtops the work.
And when his hours are numbered, and the world
Is all his own, retiring, as he were not,
Leaves, when the sun appears, astonished Art
To mimic in slow structures, stone by stone,
Built in an age, the mad wind's night-work;
The frolic architecture of the snow.

This is as simple a nature-poem as Whittier's "Snow-Bound,"—less subjective, indeed, and much less subjective than two other of New England's notable winter-pieces, Longfellow's "Snowflakes" and Lowell's "The First Snow-Fall." The seer and the mystic could treat nature in the simplest descriptive fashion when he had no other purpose in view; and seldom was he so inexcusably inaccurate an observer as in the first line of the poem just quoted. No simpler or more Saxon language need be asked than that in which are written such poems as the "The Rhodora," "The Humble-Bee," "Woodnotes," or "Ode to Beauty," some of which teach deep spiritual and vital lessons. Johnsonian expressions and Latinized words are also conspicuously absent from "The Problem" and "Initial, Dæmonic, and Celestial Love," despite the portentous title of the latter. This poet's method of teaching is well-illustrated in his "Hamatreya." He begins

by giving a list of some of his neighboring families in Concord; tells how they owned land, raised crops, added field to field, and then were laid under their own sod, "a lump of mould the more." Then comes, in the "Earth-Song," the moral of it · "Hamatreya."

Mine and yours;
Mine, not yours.
Earth endures;
Stars abide—
Shine down in the old sea;
Old are the shores;
But where are old men?
I who have seen much,
Such have I never seen.

The lawyer's deed
Ran sure,
In tail,
To them, and to their heirs
Who shall succeed,
Without fail,
Forevermore.

Here is the land
Shaggy with wood,
With its old valley,
Mound and flood.
But the heritors?—
Fled like the flood's foam.
The lawyer, and the laws,
And the kingdom,
Clean swept herefrom.

They called me theirs,
Who so controlled me;

Yet every one
Wished to stay, and is gone.
How am I theirs
If they cannot hold me,
But I hold them?—

When I heard the earth-song,
I was no longer brave;
My avarice cooled
Like lust in the chill of the grave.

In bold simplicity this curious "Earth-Song" reminds one of the earliest poetry of the Saxons, Teutons, or Icelanders. The suggestion of parts of the "Elder Edda" is peculiarly strong, and in grim earnestness the poem also recalls the expressions of the Hebrew psalmist. If Emerson had called "Hamatreya" a sermon, with Psalm xlix: 10, 11 for its text, he would have been strictly accurate; for what is the poem but an expansion of the idea of the two verses of the Hebrew poet:

"The fool and the brutish together perish,
And leave their wealth to others.
Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue forever,
And their dwelling-places to all generations;
They call their lands after their own names."

On the heights of poetry one is often reminded of Æschylus, Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, but not less truly of David, Job, Isaiah, and Joel. We have become so accustomed to call the Bible "holy," and to make it a fetich, that we half forget to call it literature. Emerson and the

greater minds, however, have not forgotten the literary character of its best books, which they paraphrase both consciously and unconsciously.

Emerson's conciseness of expression and his loftiness of religious thought may further be illustrated by quoting, entire, one other poem, that which he entitled "Brahma." This much discussed and almost famous utterance appeared in the first number (November, 1857) of *The Atlantic Monthly*, and stirred those circles in which the name of Emerson was considered honorable. Not even the members of the Emersonian cult were able to give it unanimous approval, or to aver that they all understood its meaning. To the uninitiated it was food for laughter, or at best an interesting puzzle, about as intelligible to a modern reader as the Riddles of Cynewulf—the hardest reading in the English language. Emerson's biographer * says, with his habitual neatness of wit, that "to the average Western mind it is the nearest approach to a Torricellian vacuum of intelligibility that language can pump out of itself." I do not read Emerson on my knees, sure that his every word is crammed with wisdom; and I make not the slightest claim to peculiar literary insight. Certainly, too, one must feel a little diffidence in questioning so deliberate a statement as Dr. Holmes makes when he says that "Brahma" was "one of his [Emerson's] spiritual divertisements"; and that Emerson merely "amused himself with putting in

"Brahma."

* Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Ralph Waldo Emerson," p. 397.

verse" "the 'Yoga' doctrine of Brahmanism." "The oriental side of Emerson's nature delighted itself in these narcotic dreams, born in the land of the poppy and of hashish. They lend a peculiar charm to his poems, but it is not worth while to try to construct a philosophy out of them." Of course not; Emerson would have been the last to claim that "Brahma," or fifty poems combined, offered the reader a complete philosophy. But I cannot call "Brahma" a "divertisement" until I am ready to apply the same term to Coleridge's "Hymn Before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni," or Shelley's "Life of Life, thy lips enkindle." The poem is dramatic; Emerson is not speaking for himself, save as every dramatic or subjective poet must; and his theme and reflection are of a far-away land and soul. But "Brahma," given its subject, is simple and austere. Certainly it does not belong with the class of poems to which Dr. Holmes by implication assigns it when he says a little farther on: "Emerson's reflections in the 'transcendental' mood do beyond question sometimes irresistibly suggest the close neighborhood of the sublime to the ridiculous. But very near that precipitous border-land there is a charmed region where, if the statelier growths of philosophy die out and disappear, the flowers of poetry next the very edge of the chasm have a peculiar and mysterious beauty." Nothing would be easier than to cull from Emerson lines, stanzas, and whole poems that seem, and are, across the border-land of the

ridiculous. Emerson himself tacitly acknowledged the fact, in his revisions; and there is no reason why his students should deny it. To prove it by quotations would be superfluous, for the winnowing of time has already thrown to oblivious winds most of the Emersonian chaff, which, after all, is but a very fraction of his poetic crop. Enough that is good remains, and "Brahma," unless I am sadly mistaken, is a part of this selected and choice remainder. Read it again:

If the red slayer thinks he slays,
  Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
  I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;
  Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear;
  And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;
  When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
  And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,
  And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek lover of the good!
  Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

A paraphrase of this brief poem seems almost superfluous and absurd, and cannot, in prose,

equal its terseness of expression: If he who kills think that his act is final, if he who is killed think that he falls without present part in the divine plan, or future hope, neither has any idea of that rule of the universe which bides long for the full adjustment after seeming indifference and delay. Divine power is omnipresent and omniscient; in its plans virtue and vice play their appointed parts; of it the rude divinities of the past were prototypes; and its measures of man's success or failure are not the world's measures. To be without God in the world is to die to all true life, for he is all and in all; he recognizes his own among those deemed heretical, as well as in the services of the "orthodox" churches or religions of any age. The greatest and best have longed for him, but he is found most by those who are meek and self-sacrificing, and who do not good works for the mere hope of reward.

Thus does Emerson, from an oriental text, restate the lesson of man's relation to him whom the Anglo-Saxon poet named in that mighty word, "All-walda," and whom the Hebrews called Jehovah. Some parts of the poem could be paralleled from the words of the Bible, which instantly occur to the mind in connection with such lines as "Far or forgot to me is near," or "When me they fly, I am the wings." The paraphrase in the last instance must have been intentional. That God is in nature, that man aspires to complete communion with God, and that high love is the means

toward this communion—if this thought is obscure then the founders of Christianity were themselves riddle-makers.*

The poetry of Emerson is valued, at least in some of its parts, both by those who find enjoyment in smoothly lyrical expression of common and obvious meditation or observation, and by those who are willing to give to verse a deep study, if but that study be rewarded by the discovery of intrinsically valuable or novel thought. Here are pure sunshine and simple bird songs—the mere pleasure of existence and joyous perception; here, too, are intense peerings toward zenith and nadir. Emerson's verse, like his prose, might not inaptly be called "Thoughts on the Universe,"—the title of the *magnum opus* of Master Byles Gridley, in Dr. Holmes' novel "The Guardian Angel." The universe, in Emerson's eyes, was a great and ever-present ideal teacher, whose lessons he studied and tried to interpret for others. Sentient and

General estimate of Emerson's Poetry.

* Interesting parallelisms between "Brahma" and "Hamatreya" and passages from Eastern and other sources which may have been suggestive to Emerson's mind are given by several correspondents of *The Critic*, Feb. 4, Feb. 18, and March 3, 1888. Dr. C. A. Bartol's communication of the last date is so valuable a comment that it is worth preservation here:

"The store Emerson at one time set by this poem ['Brahma'] appears from his resisting, as Mr. J. T. Fields told me he did, a proposal to omit it from a collection the publishers were making of his works. This he said must go in, whatever else stayed out. Not that he thought much of his verses in general. To Dr. F. H. Hedge he said that he composed lines because he happened to have a nice lead-pencil and some good paper. He told Mr. Sanborn he doubted if he could write poetry, to which the reply was, 'Some of us think you can write nothing else.' But he disparaged his own rhymes and put none of them into 'Parnassus.' Perhaps it was his admiration of the Oriental genius that made him insist on the claim of

non-sentient Nature, with the individual and self-reliant soul at the top, mirrors for that soul the spiritual element, instructs and helps it, and foretells the future which its Maker has in store for the upward-striving creatures made in his own image. This sentence may be said, not unfairly, to be the key-note of Emerson's oft-expressed answers to the riddle of life. The answers are—as I have said—in substance identical, whether expressed in poetry or in prose; the poems, at their best, are more concise than the prose, more intense, and more ideal in thought and expression; at their worst, they are more obscure, fragmentary, and unsatisfactory. The union of blind thought and crude art is a dreary thing, but it is a thing too often present in Emerson's verse. His poetry was his serenest heaven and his most convenient rubbish-heap.

Some of the statements thus far made are sufficient to explain the present and probably the future lack of the highest fame for Emerson's

Brahma. It went, indeed, to the heart of his religion and philosophy, in which the *One* was all. To a friend doubting immortality, he said such a question betrayed lack of intellect. But he did not think Jesus taught it as a doctrine apart from life. In his last days he affirmed for the soul *identity* despite death, whether he meant individual persistence, or the oneness with the Father Jesus affirmed, or both as conjoined in the same truth. What he resented was any implication of that truth with a particular period, here or hereafter, of time. Infinite Presence forbade, with him, consideration of there or then. His idea of spirit as eternal and its own evidence disinclined him to spiritualism or the acceptance of any prodigy as proof, or to transmigration as the process of survival. Yet the charm for him of speculation in all the religious books of the far East indicates a peculiar constitution in an American, and is one of the most interesting facts in our literary history."

verse. Popularity is a relative term; in one sense Sophocles, Dante, and Shakespeare are not popular. Without stopping to discuss this broad question, it is evident that Emerson, though deserving, as we have seen, to be called a favored writer, is not popular as poet, in the sense in which we apply the adjective to Shelley or Keats, Bryant or Longfellow, for instance. His own prose has reached many highly intelligent minds to which his verse is still comparatively unwelcome. This fact is not wholly due to the general intelligibility and popularity of prose as compared with poetry; for it is equally true, by converse, that the wings of song can carry a thought farther afield than the slow steps of prose; and that a poem is more likely to be widely loved than is an essay. Emerson's own verse shows that his highest and noblest poems, when most artistically written, are the most widely popular. Orphic sayings, bluntly or rudely put, may fail because of their bluntness; but the same high thought, nobly sung in melodious numbers, will become widely current. Shakespeare is not world-famous because he is superficial, but because he fitly words the deepest thoughts of the race. We may properly conclude, therefore, that the failure of a part of Emerson's poetry, compared with that produced by minds of the same general literary rank, or with the average of his own prose, was his own fault and not that of his readers. In a certain way he failed for the same reason that the classicist Walter Savage Landor failed; but

Its Future.

Emerson's prose, of course, so far surpasses Landor's that it throws a friendly radiance on his kindred verse. Landor was a poet of limited but true power, who also wrote prose; Emerson wrote both poetry and prose, for an identical purpose; the likeness between Landor and Emerson rests in the fact that they did not impress their poetic gift upon the world-heart as the great poet ought to do. No amount of special pleading can deny the fact that ultimate high success is the final seal of the poet's mission.

But in speaking of Emerson's failure the term is used relatively, and with reference to no more than a part of his verse. He wrote poetry under peculiar circumstances and with peculiar aims. His purposes were self-recognized, and they met with all the success he desired or expected. His limitations and terminations were known to none better than to himself:

Success as far as Success was sought.

> Best boon of life is presence of a Muse
> That does not wish to wander, comes by stealth,
> Divulging to the heart she sets on flame
> No popular tale or toy, no cheap renown.

So long as his heart was set on flame he cared neither for cheap renown nor for high. He knew what he did not do, or could not do, as well as what he did and could. A serene nature like his would be the last to complain; it made the most of itself, and that was enough, in both senses of the word. Emerson gave us so much that

there is no reason for lamenting that he did not give more. He was neither one who was cut off in youth, like Keats, nor one who left only exquisite fragments, like Coleridge. No American had a better right than he to say (in his poem entitled "Terminus") that he obeyed the voice at eve obeyed at prime.

The poetry of Emerson, whatever its special manner or theme, is the poetry of acquiescence, optimism, idealism, spiritualism, individualism. It often has a didactic and magisterial tone, rather than the moralizing tone of Wordsworth or Cowper. "Do this," "shun that," it swiftly says. "Be not a fool, not a money-maker, but a poet and a lover of the beautiful and the good." Nature, rightly understood, is a fit and lovely thing, and so is the soul at its best. Poetry notes and intensely describes some of the qualities of each, or of both. It was no wonder that Emerson anticipated, in half-a-dozen poems, the later conclusions of the evolutionists. He was the singer of the upward march of nature and the onward march of man. His poetic field was too broad to be tilled thoroughly in many parts. He was too proverbial to be a great constructive artist. He gives us saws, sayings, admonitions, flashes, glimpses, few broad constructed pictures. With these we are content, and do not ask him for epics, tragedies, or "Excursions," having poems like those already named; or "Good-bye, Proud World," "The Sphinx," and the "Concord Hymn"; or lines like

The Poetry of an Optimist.

He builded better than he knew;

Earth proudly wears the Parthenon
As the best gem upon her zone;

The silent organ loudest chants
The master's requiem;

And conscious law is king of kings;

Or music pours on mortals
Its beautiful disdain.

Emerson's poetic art was at times of exquisite quality, a lovely presentation of noble thought. The perfection of verbal melody exists when the reader or hearer cannot conceive of any other way of singing the thought; and not a few of Emerson's lines or poems well bear this test. When this art gives place to grim force we do not feel, as Lowell said of Whittier, that Emerson as poet is

"Both singing and striking in front of the war
And hitting his foes with the mallet of Thor,"

for Emerson's stern strength is not that of a Taillefer but rather that of a Saxon law-maker. He announces, with all his force, but does not wage war in defence of the sayings he has uttered with oracular positiveness. Emerson is one more illustration of the fact, too often forgotten, that a poet can be forcible and lyrical at the same time; rooted in cold, deep thought and giving to the warm winds the loveliest flowers of beauty. Emerson, more than any American poet, severely tests and almost defies the laws of poetics, as they

have been deduced from other languages and applied to English scansion; but yet from his work may be selected many an example proving anew that English is capable of fine and deliberate metrical and melodious effects. He who recognizes Emerson's aims and methods will attempt neither to prove all his failures to be glorious successes, which men are too blind to see; nor to declare him rugged or unmelodious or obscure,—the poet who, when he would, could sing so sweet and clear a song.

CHAPTER VI.

POETS OF FREEDOM AND CULTURE: WHITTIER, LOWELL AND HOLMES.

IT would seem natural to look to the United States, the world's most successful experiment in democratic government, for a literature peculiarly expressive of the idea of freedom. A certain disappointment is therefore felt when one finds, in two centuries and a half of English history on American soil, so much second-hand and second-rate theology, such weak and imitative semi-religious philosophy, and not a little that is conventional or negative as far as freedom is concerned, in Irving, Longfellow, and dozens of lesser writers. Is our literature, from the "Bay Psalm Book" upward, a pale reflection of better things abroad, unmarked by the national characteristics which commend the society and government of America to the half-reverent study of the old world, perplexed by the problems of the closing years of the nineteenth century?

The Idea of Freedom in American Literature.

Yet let us not forget, in the first place, that the ideas of Greek, Roman, French, German, or English individualism color but a small part of literature; so that no disproportionate claim should be made upon American writers. In the second

place, when timid provincialism gave way,—and never did it sooner yield in a colony,—the line of freedom's light became strongly and constantly apparent in Franklin's state and miscellaneous papers; in hundreds of speeches, from Otis' and Henry's to Webster's and Lincoln's; in the spiritual protests or asseverations of Channing and Emerson; and here and there in the histories of Bancroft, Motley, and Parkman. Imaginative or ideal themes chosen by poet or romancer, though less closely connected with the liberty-thought, demand free air for their development; Hawthorne's democracy liked an aristocratic background, but it was democracy still, and in its love for humanity it studied aristocracy and feudalism from the outside. Cooper sometimes carried patriotism into Buncombe County; Bryant made the solemn hills preach discreet political sermons; Emerson's "Concord Hymn" is bone and sinew of the Saxon race in their latest home; and the poetry of our wars, though poor by absolute standards, is relatively not inferior to that of other lands. Fortunate indeed, and sufficiently prominent in the patriotism of its literature, is a country that within fifty years can produce such a singer for liberty and for home as Whittier, and can proffer, as in Lowell's verse, the hot fire of localism and the calm culture of deliberate study.

The prime rhetorical requisite is to have something to say; and so we demand of the would-be poet that he sing to us a true song. Whittier, in his passionate anti-slavery

John Greenleaf Whittier, b. 1807.

ballads, his lyrics and idyls of the plain New England home, and his serene hymns of religious trust, sings from the pure depths of a sincere soul. His verse is diffuse and of irregular merit; from it there might be drawn an instructive glossary of mispronunciations and excruciating rhymes; and it contains a large percentage of those "occasional" poems which would be a literary pest were they not so promptly and efficaciously covered by the recurrent tides of time. Yet Whittier, without being able to avail himself of the spoils of classical culture, and with all the disadvantages incident to the calling of the political poet, has succeeded by the strength of his conviction,—a conviction affecting, as well as relying upon, the spontaneous grace of a natural melodist. Sometimes his lame muse of language "goes halting along where he bids her go free"; but at other times thought and form unite in unstudied beauty. Not one of the chief American poets, in the strictest use of the adjective, Whittier has slowly reached, in a green old age, a recognized fame which the cold classicist in verse, or the restless sensationalist, might well envy. In fresh naturalness of utterance, as well as in his rise from the humble life of the sturdy New England Quaker yeomanry, he is in a small way the American Burns; yet how different his serene and undisturbed career—amid the glare and hate of the anti-slavery conflict—from the woe and excess of the short life of the great Scotch lyrist!

The numerous books by Whittier, the non-sig-

nificant titles of which do not call for recapitulation, have been for the most part small collections of miscellaneous poems, taking their names from the first, or longest, or most noteworthy lyrics or descriptive pieces. He began to send "verses" to a local newspaper, printed near his Massachusetts birthplace, when he was but seventeen. The muse of song beckoned him when a farm-lad or shoemaker's helper, and she still led him forward at fourscore years. At the district school or the town academy of Haverhill, and at the editor's desk in Haverhill, Boston, Hartford, Philadelphia, or Washington, his thought and pen were never long sundered, and he produced an uninterrupted series of songs of American country life; bugle blasts in the van of freedom; or organ strains of deep religious faith and hope. Whittier, on the whole, has lived nearer the homely heart and life of his northern countrymen than any other American poet, save Longfellow. His reformatory lyrics have been saved from a shrill strident tone by his refreshing habit of turning aside to the simplest and most peaceful country scenes and characters; and the chief idyl of New England, "Snow-Bound," resembles "The Cotter's Saturday Night" in its presentation of the soul as well as the body of the people's life. With the exception of "Snow-Bound," the greater part of his poetical product has been exactly and constantly of the character which attracts, instructs, and benefits for the time, but lacks the inherent elements of perennial great-

Whittier's Books.

ness. Whittier was honest and wise when he said that, though not insensible to literary reputation, he set a higher value on his "name as appended to the anti-slavery declaration of 1833 than on the title page of any book."

The Character of the Man.

Behind all his work appears the character of the man, which may be called more attractive than the work itself. Admiration spontaneously and often springs toward the sweet pictures and pure pathos of his village poems, the burning force of his scornfully indignant lyrics attacking the horrors of human enslavement, the story of the honored patriotism of poor old Barbara Frietchie during the Confederate invasion of Maryland, the unfaltering trust of such a religious utterance as "My Psalm.' But Whittier as idyllist, reformer, patriot, or preacher is less closely connected with his readers hearts than Whittier the man. Criticism is not yet quite ready to eliminate the personal element from its estimates; and nowhere else in American song does that element come so near. The personal and subjective poets are usually those who are most fluent in descriptions of unimportant characteristics of their time and place; and so Whittier, like the greater Wordsworth, burdens his pages with much that is trivial and inartistic. His subjectivity, too, like Longfellow's, is for the most part of an obvious and readily intelligible kind. And yet shall the clearness and commonness of love of home and country, memory of the dead, hatred of cruelty, devotion to duty and

God, remand these sentiments to the lower order of verse? Not so, thought Shakespeare. Whittier's art, imperfect in expression, is grounded in the verities and eternities; his sentiment will live when its utterance has ended a temporary work, —and there is as yet no sign of death in "Maud Muller," "Barbara Frietchie," "Skipper Ireson's Ride," "In School-Days," "Laus Deo," or "Snow-Bound."*

His country-heart.

In Whittier, as in tens of thousands of the world's brave soldiers, love of the country and love of country seem almost identical. The young editor in various eastern cities never lost his constant and affectionate memories of the lovely Essex county which gave him birth; and he carried into his political work the placid strength of the Merrimack in its familiar meadows near the sea. Like Bryant, Whittier has always been a ruralist at heart; but, more fortunate than Bryant, he has spent the latter half of his life amid the rustic scenes so often portrayed in his verse. In the Revolution and the civil war many a soldier, from North or South, spent in flame and blood the strength acquired in fields and woods; and so Whittier, the reformer has ever been all the mightier for his country heart. His Friends' "inner light," too, kept him from the uncharitable and unchristian excesses of so many of the Abolitionists, whose

* Mr. Whittier's pleasant prose has already passed into the shadow, and calls for no mention here; nor does his kindly and frequent service as editor or preface-writer.

self-wisdom and self-righteousness would not brook the slightest divergence from the individual say-so. Had Whittier been less loving, he would have been a mere dogmatist and destructive; had he been less stern, he would not have been found

> "Both singing and striking in front of the war
> And hitting his foes with the mallet of Thor."

It is not the poetry of politics, however impassioned or effective, upon which long renown is based. As the years go by, we chiefly prize Whittier's lyrics of anti-slavery and war for what they were rather than what they are. Even "Ichabod," wherein Whittier thought he wrote the doom of Webster's fame, is now read, if at all, because of its connection with an orator who is challenging Burke's renown in English prose. But when, in reform or in battle, the poet finds a theme which he transfigures with the glory of imaginative genius or intellectual might, the poem lives, like Milton's sonnet "On the Late Massacre in Piemont." Our war-verse thus keeps in its choicest division Whittier's noble ballad of "Barbara Frietchie," with its simple grace and its throb of the heart of all humanity. Though we pass by the "lines written for" this or that occasion, we treasure the stanzas of "The Farewell of a Virginia Slave Mother to her Daughters sold into Southern Bondage," for their lyrical swing is as attractive as their monitory woe is strong:

Transient and permanent.

> Gone, gone,—sold and gone,
> To the rice-swamp dank and lone.

Where the slave-whip ceaseless swings,
Where the noisome insect stings,
Where the fever demon strews
Poison with the falling dews,
Where the sickly sunbeams glare
Through the hot and misty air,

Gone, gone,—sold and gone,
To the rice-swamp dank and lone,
From Virginia's hills and waters,
Woe is me, my stolen daughters!

This lyrical power is often and obviously present in Whittier—the power of sweetly singing a thought of ideal truth. Sometimes it is manifested side by side with some rugged sign of haste in word or rhyme; sometimes its melody beautifies an entire poem. None but a poet could frame such lines as

Lyrical power.

The dear delight of doing good;

And pale remorse the ghost of sin;

Evermore the month of roses
Shall be sacred time to thee;

For thee thy sons shall nobly live,
And at thy need shall die for thee;

But life shall on and upward go;

Th' eternal step of progress beats
To that great anthem, calm and slow,
Which God repeats.

Whittier's readers readily admit that his mental character and chosen method of composition have scattered rich thoughts here and there, without striving, first of all, to co-ordinate them in artistic

unities; but the pleasure and profit found in the somewhat random product amply atone for the apparently wayward defect. The "fatal fluency" to which criticism has made objection seems like self-sacrifice on the poet's part: he gives to humanity the songs he might have given to eternal art. Warm love, in the spiritual world, is better than cold praise; and when the praise is deserved and given, it is glowing and free. After all, we are what we are, and each man, by being himself, gets his precise deserts in the world of letters as in the world of life. Whittier's lyrics remind us that if we cannot always have the results of hand-work and soul-work, we are at least spared the coldly technical success and its incident sense of spiritual disappointment. The simple song, the narrow range—and Whittier's homestead-love, humanitarianism, and piety are really one—are those we best love in our tenderer moods. Here, as in so many other instances, the poet has measured his powers and surveyed his field, and rests content with work and reward. Said Whittier, once: "I never had any methods. When I felt like it, I wrote, and I had neither the health nor patience to work over it afterward. It usually went as it was originally completed." But this spontaneous song-power is able at times to produce such a symmetrical and beautiful result as "The Pipes at Lucknow," which seems to me the lyrical masterpiece of Whittier, and the best of the poems called forth

by the event described. It is all lovely, but the best stanzas for illustration are the three which follow:

O, they listened, looked, and waited,
Till their hope became despair;
And the sobs of low bewailing
Filled the pauses of their prayer.
Then upspake a Scottish maiden,
With her ear unto the ground:
"Dinna ye hear it?—dinna ye hear it?
The pipes o' Havelock sound!"

Hushed the wounded man his groaning;
Hushed the wife her little ones;
Alone they heard the drum-roll
And the roar of Sepoy guns.
But to sounds of home and childhood
The Highland ear was true;—
As her mother's cradle-crooning
The mountain pipes she knew.

Like the march of soundless music
Through the vision of the seer,
More of feeling than of hearing,
Of the heart than of the ear,
She knew the droning pibroch,
She knew the Campbell's call,
"Hark! hear ye no' MacGregor's,—
The grandest o' them all!"

Nature and exercise of Whittier's powers.

The nature and exercise of Whittier's powers have been precisely those best calculated to promote his work as people's poet. A strong-souled man, trained in rural New England, early given the benefit of cosmopolitan work in troublous political times, at length permitted to return to his favorite country scenes,

and belonging by inheritance and conviction to a religious body making much of the "inner light" of God in the heart, Whittier has by his free and natural songs made freedom a duty and religion a joy. His genius is wholly instinctive and national. When peace followed the storms of political struggle and of civil war, he returned naturally to the themes and methods of nature and the soul. Unvexed by literary envy, and oblivious to mere fame, he became the laureate of the ocean beach, the inland lake, the little wood-flower, and the divine sky. The strength and the songs of youth and middle-age were freely given to humanity, often at the expense of art; but his life has been so spared that he has produced distinctly literary work enough for a more than transient fame. The gold in his verse is plentifully mixed with dross, but it may readily be found. It is the gold of the man's heart, quickly wrought by the facile artist's hand. It is but a step from the prose thought to the poetic verse: thus the thought "that the natural circumstances of death cannot make any real change of character; that no one can be compelled to be good or evil; that freedom of choice belongs to both worlds, and that sin is, by its very nature, inseparable from suffering" sings itself in the spontaneous music of such stanzas as this:

I know not where his islands lift
  Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
  Beyond his love and care.

Whittier's merits are best summarized in his New England winter idyl "Snow-Bound," from which his customary defects are creditably absent. Upon this poem, as the years go by, will chiefly rest its maker's fame. It combines his descriptive and lyrical powers with his accustomed expression of the thoughts and hopes of the human heart. Whittier's early success in poetizing New England legends, Indian and other, had been very moderate, a fact which the poet had recognized by abandoning many of his earliest productions. Aboriginal myths and Indian conflicts were to him, as to many others, tempting themes; but he missed the triumph attained by no more than one of his fellow-singers. "Snow-Bound," however, was an inspiration of his own heart and life. Home is as narrow as the ancestral walls, but as broad as humanity; and here is a work both local and general,—of the kind which tends to make the whole world kin. It is a little sphere seen through the transparent soul and style of the simple poet. Notwithstanding the freshness of spring, the luxuriance of June, and the sober wealth of autumn, winter is the most characteristic season of that land to which the Pilgrims came in December; and therefore "Snow-Bound" is a fitly chosen title for Whittier's characteristic scenes and portraits. The muse, like the man, after the fierce work of abolition, came back at last, and found that "East, west, hame's best." Having strongly helped to shape the political history and social life of the nation,

"Snow-Bound."

Whittier turned to sing of one of its typical hearthstones. Here were needed no fruit of foreign culture, no high search for the ideal, no philosophic didacticism; the home-bred singer, like so many of his predecessors, framed the simple chant of that which he best knew. The wasteful irregularity and hurried excess which have diminished or destroyed the value of so much of Whittier's writing—and so much of American literature—here give place to the simplicity of artless art, lightly touched and slightly transfigured by gleams of that ideal excellence toward which life and its reflecting literature aspire.

Little by little, during the decades since the publication of "Snow-Bound," it has become almost axiomatic in America to say that the poem deserves mention with "The Deserted Village" and "The Cotter's Saturday Night." Perhaps this verdict, though common, is too hurriedly confident; but it is certain that the qualities of the poem are the same as those which have given lasting renown to its famous forerunners; and that it shows "no sign of age, no fear to die." In its native character and indigenous worth its nearest rival is "The Biglow Papers"; and "The Biglow Papers," written in dialect, during twenty years, cannot be considered a unity. Sometimes homely pathos and kindly humor combine with facile art to produce, as here, a rounded literary result. We see and learn to know and love this plain country home, with its honest faces illumined by the great fire of an "old-fashioned

rinter," and with its surrounding and imprisoning lory of the ample northern snow. And from it ll there rises the world-hymn:

What matter how the night behaved?
What matter how the north-wind raved?
Blow high, blow low, not all its snow
Could quench our hearth-fire's ruddy glow.
O Time and Change!—with hair as gray
As was my sire's that winter day,
How strange it seems, with so much gone
Of life and love, to still live on!
Ah, brother! only I and thou
Are left of all that circle now,—
The dear home faces whereupon
That fitful firelight paled and shone.
Henceforward, listen as we will,
The voices of that hearth are still;
Look where we may, the wide earth o'er,
Those lighted faces smile no more.
We tread the paths their feet have worn,
We sit beneath their orchard-trees,
We hear, like them, the hum of bees
And rustle of the bladed corn;
We turn the pages that they read,
Their written words we linger o'er.
But in the sun they cast no shade,
No voice is heard, no sign is made,
No step is on the conscious floor!
Yet love will dream, and faith will trust
(Since he who knows our need is just),
That somehow, somewhere, meet we must.
Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress-trees!
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day
Across the mournful marbles play!

Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That Life is ever lord of Death,
And Love can never lose its own!

There is naught of unkindness or injustice in saying that Whittier as poet is not great but good, in every sense of the adjective.* Who would not be satisfied with such a life work in letters, self-crowned at nigh four-score years by a book so true as "Saint Gregory's Guest, and Other Poems?" Of the poet himself might be spoken the words he therein sang of a dead New England painter:

Magician, who from commonest elements
Called up divine ideals, clothed upon
By mystic lights, soft blending into one
Womanly grace and child-like innocence.
Teacher! thy lesson was not given in vain.
Beauty is goodness; ugliness is sin;
Art's place is sacred: nothing foul therein
May crawl or tread with bestial feet profane.

Whittier and Lowell.

There is an interesting contrast between the lives of the two principal poets of anti-slavery in America. Whittier was born in a country town, of Quaker parentage; obtained a meagre English education by his own efforts; served here and there in the humdrum toils of the editor; and at length permanently retired to the Arcadian simplicity of rural quiet.

* "If men will impartially, and not asquint, look toward the offices and function of a poet, they will easily conclude to themselves the impossibility of any man's being the good poet, without first being a good man."—Ben Jonson, dedication of "Volpone; or, The Fox."

Lowell was born in a Boston suburb; his father was minister of a prominent city church; his education was in the oldest American college, the somewhat slender resources of which—even in its Augustan literary period—he supplemented in the cultured circles of eastern Massachusetts; in mature youth he took his seat in the Harvard chair of modern languages, as Longfellow's successor; thenceforward, for many years, he lived a literary life quite closely corresponding to that of old-world centres of authorship; and at length, in Madrid and London, he represented the United States in ancient and important courts. But Lowell, the representative of culture and of what has been called the "Brahmin caste of Boston," will chiefly be remembered as poet because of his New England heart and voice—his idyls of the Junes and Decembers of Massachusetts, and his verse of anti-slavery and patriotism, beginning with the fierce blasts against the pro-slavery Mexican war of 1848, and ending with the serene fervor of the Harvard Commemoration Ode of 1865. With more humor and romantic sentiment, Lowell resembles Whittier in his two chief lines of poetic work and success. To the thought of freedom, rural and national, have been added some of the spoils of time, but the general theme and temper are unchanged.

There was not much in a large part of Lowell's early verse to promise that he would be a characteristic American humorist, satirist, idyllist, and critic. It was simply the lyrical product of a

young man of sentiment, and sometimes of sentimentality. To write a "Serenade," lines sent "With a Pressed Flower," "songs" and "stanzas" on this or that, addresses "To the Past" and "To the Future," "incidents" of one sort or another, and miscellaneous personalities "to," or moral reflections "on,"—all these were marks of an age the spirit of which was felt by Longfellow, Whittier, and all. Irené, Allegra, Hebe, and Perdita are the ladies who figure prominently in such *juvenilia* as these, which must distress the calm soul of the mature re-reader. The moon and the sea, of course, were sometimes able to express the conditions and longings of the poet's soul, which, however, was occasionally forced to utter itself in a grand combination of the methods of the early Tennysonian lyric and of the novels of the junior Cobb:

Lowell's Early Poems.

I waited with a maddened grin
To hear that voice all icy thin
Slide forth and tell my deadly sin
To hell and heaven, Rosaline!
But no voice came, and then it seemed,
That if the very corpse had screamed,
The sound like sunshine glad had streamed
Through that dark stillness, Rosaline!

And then, amid the silent night,
I screamed with horrible delight,
And in my brain an awful light
Did seem to crackle, Rosaline!
It is my curse! sweet memories fall
From me like snow,—and only all
Of that one night, like cold worms crawl
My doomed heart over, Rosaline!

The poet, like the fat boy in "Pickwick," evidently "wants to make your flesh creep."

But it is far easier to criticise the old sentimental revival of American letters, than it was to resist its influence at the time. Irving had paved the way; and an emancipated nationalism, affected by novel religious and social reforms, and stirred by a fresh sense of power, naturally turned our young writers toward extravagance and artificiality. England herself was sharing the same feeling, which, indeed, had already affected France and Germany, where Goethe had many a time crossed the line separating bombast from power. There was in young Lowell, after all, an evident, though by no means regular, thought-strength and word-strength; his best ideas were true; of the imaginative quality of his mind there could be no question; and in his earliest books he promptly struck some notes of originality. Maturity and good judgment are precisely the qualities which marked Lowell's brilliant literary review in verse, "A Fable for Critics," described at some length in a preceding chapter of the present history. A young man who could characterize a literature, scarcely older than himself, with the insight and the prophetic wisdom which Lowell displayed at the age of twenty-nine, was assuredly in no danger of being permanently bound by the iron fetters of custom or the flowery garlands of a fleeting fashion.

"A Fable for Critics."

As we re-read Lowell's early verse, good and bad, in many strains, we recognize the courage of

the poet in retaining so much of it. The mind of the imaginative genius cannot be restricted to any narrow range of thought or song. In later years Lowell has been a conservative, in his publication of none but his best; the same principle was doubtless his guide in youth, but his early best was irregular. The poetic product has varied greatly in value, but it has almost always seemed sincere. When, as in the absurd poem from which stanzas have been cited, Lowell yielded to a notion, he at least yielded himself without reserve. The singer who was willing to sacrifice so much for the sake of anti-slavery and unpopular religious movements, and to write a whole series of poems, with his utmost force, against a popular war, is certainly not amenable to the charge of weakness. The lack of Addisonian care in the preparation of his prose is paralleled by a certain lavishness in the production of his verse; but on the whole Lowell was more likely to be endangered by conservatism than by spontaneity. We pardon the occasional silly jingles and the bathos in his first books, for the sake of their idyllic promise, their romantic and poetic feeling, and their strong creative originality in some fields. The worst fault in his volumes of verse produced before middle life is, after all, that of prolixity; the greatest merit, of course, is the conspicuous presence of the poetic gift.

Manly Sincerity.

The human element in Lowell, when it finds expression in verses of life, is far from Poe's

bloodless passionateness, though it hardly beats with the warm heart of Longfellow. Lowell's non-political and non-humorous verse is usually that of tender thoughtfulness. There is a place in our song for his "A Requiem" as well as for "Annabel Lee" or "Resignation":

Humanity.

Now I can love thee truly,
For nothing comes between
The senses and the spirit,
The seen and the unseen;
Lifts the eternal shadow,
The silence bursts apart,
And the soul's boundless future
Is present in my heart.

The grave reflectiveness of the scholar but serves to heighten the simple grief and the earnest hope of the man. Later he wrote, in a poem free from every fault of his earlier work:

Not all the preaching since Adam
Has made Death other than Death.

but yet in this darkest doubt, he exclaimed:

Immortal? I feel it and know it,
Who doubts it of such as she?

The conflicting moods of this mature poem, "After the Burial," often appear in the earlier verse. Lowell is a poet of the eternal mystery of life and death; and his answers are neither those of hasty faith nor those of long despair. In reply to the questions of the open grave his best lyrics are sung:

As a twig trembles, which a bird
  Lights on to sing, then leaves unbent,
So is my memory thrilled and stirred;—
  I only know she came and went.*

I know not how others saw her,
  But to me she was wholly fair,
And the light of the heaven she came from
  Still lingered and gleamed in her hair;
For it was wavy and golden,
  And as many changes took
As the shadows of sun-gilt ripples
  On the yellow bed of a brook.†

Even in his poems of the heart, Lowell's poetic fancy made him too lavish in illustration and epithet. A discreeter bard would have restricted his figurative language, and won greater fame. His facility and fertility pleased the few and repelled the many. Lowell's

Lavishness.

O'er yon bare knoll the pointed cedar shadows
Drowse on the crisp, gray moss; the ploughman's call
  Creeps faint as smoke from black, fresh-furrowed meadows;
The single crow a single caw lets fall;
  And all around me every bush and tree
  Says Autumn's here, and Winter soon will be,
Who snows his soft, white sleep and silence over all

is poetical, but it delights no more than one reader of the ten who take pleasure in Bryant's

The melancholy days are come, the saddest of the year,
Of wailing winds, and naked woods, and meadows brown and sere.

* "She Came and Went." † "The Changeling."

Few indeed are the poets of nature or the heart who can make obvious the ideal and universal. Lowell attempts to give us too much; the forty long stanzas of "An Indian Summer Reverie," full of apt allusions, we gladly exchange for the few well-known June-lines of "The Vision of Sir Launfal." Seldom indeed can a singer succeed by the very opulence of suggestiveness, as in Shelley's "Cloud," which is itself dangerously near such repetition or confusion as one notes in Lowell's "To a Pine-Tree," which just escapes grandeur, but escapes it utterly.

Few readers know what deep and rich philosophy, what fruits of thought and culture, are to be found in some of Lowell's work: for instance, in "Columbus," "Beaver Brook," "On a Portrait of Dante by Giotto," "Stanzas on Freedom," "The Ghost-Seer," "Prometheus," and a dozen others as good. If our literature shall ever fade and die in the coming centuries, and some future reader shall stumble upon Lowell's books, he will easily and excusably wax highly enthusiastic over the unquestionable wealth of thought therein discovered. As he founds a new cult, he may confidently exclaim, in Lowell's own language: Philosophic Thought.

> Great truths are portions of the soul of man;
> Great souls are portions of eternity.

And yet there is a sad possibility that he will at

length see the blemish of too many of these poems, the blemish already mentioned here, and expressed by that most coldly satirical of criticisms: "Words, words, words."

Verbosity.

There is no use in denying or minimizing this fact, to which must be added the equally apparent fault of careless expression on Lowell's part. Not often, in the history of poetry, does one find a poetical product at once so genuinely valuable and so annoyingly irregular. It is easy, of course, to name a dozen poets who have written too much or too hastily—who is exempt from one or the other fault? But in Lowell's verse there is a peculiar and an aggravating variety of impulsive ideas and swift expressions. Force and fire are secured on the one hand, at the expense, perhaps, of the consistency of art. An artist may fail, like Tennyson in his dramas; but at least Tennyson does his best,—the failure is likely to be inherent in the singer or his theme. There is in Tennyson, now and then, a misapprehension, perhaps grotesquely complete, a fall, perhaps pitiful; but it is not one of carelessness or hurry. A close study and minute analysis of Lowell's language, whether in prose or verse, brings promptly to view an array of errors which cannot be paralleled in the works of Emerson, Bryant, Longfellow, or Hawthorne, his fellow-workers and contemporaries. A scholar of thorough culture in more than one field, he vexes the refined sense as truly as Whitman and more often than Whittier.

But James Russell Lowell is a wit and a gen-

ius: wit sparkles through whole essays and long poems, and in the best parts of "A Fable for Critics" or "The Biglow Papers" it fairly proves that it *is* genius. Who would exchange such results, so brilliant and so illuminating, for a ten-fold number of machine-essays or Odes to Propriety? The very faults are human and helpful. Lowell is a poet of freedom, of nature, and of human nature. His intellectual freaks and sallies are those of a patriot and reformer, a man whose spontaneity is better than his imitativeness or his deliberateness. The qualities of such great books as "The Vicar of Wakefield" or "Gil Blas"—irregular pictures of an irregular world—are those which now and then reappear in the pages of this Yankee idyllist, foe of slavery and of war, and lover of special American humanity seen against the background of the old-world's centuries. We could not have had the "Commemoration Ode," or "The Courtin'," or even "The Vision of Sir Launfal," from a man without a human heart and brain. And time, in his case, will once more carry forward the slow and unerring process of saving from the mass the select literary "remnant" of the lastingly valuable.

Poems of Freedom, Nature, and Human Nature.

In a previous chapter and volume of this history I have already noted the injurious effect of the varied and elementary demands of American life upon our scientists, to the injury of what ought to have been their large and originally valuable creative work.

Varied demands of American life.

I shall have occasion hereafter to study the influence of the same multifarious industry or prodigality upon recent fiction. Its mark is plain, also, upon the work of Whittier and Lowell. But character is a higher thing than art, after all; and there is character in these two men, and in nearly all of their books. Lowell the editor, abolitionist, religious liberal, critic, diplomat, is also the writer of that noble allegory of good deeds, "The Vision of Sir Launfal," with its lofty lesson and its warm glow of idyllic sunshine. All at once, forty years ago, his rich mind could give the world an intellectual and moral store so varied as that of this evenly-presented "Vision"; the stern political warning of "The Present Crisis"; the pungent satire—though sometimes coarsely written for quick effect—of the first series of "The Biglow Papers," in which he taught his readers to love the New England fields, and to hate the pro-slavery Mexican war; and the swift survey of our nascent literature proffered in the unsurpassed "Fable for Critics." Work at once so rapid and so good never came, within so brief a period, from an American pen. With all Whittier's love of New England soil and men, and all his hate of oppression and political truckling, Lowell also displayed wit and humor that sent his shafts straight home, but, unfortunately, made thousands of careless readers believe him a mere jester or at best a vitriolic satirist, as in "What Mr. Robinson Thinks," a poem upon which its unfortunate

"The Vision of Sir Launfal."

"The Biglow Papers."

subject's reputation chiefly rests. "The Biglow Papers" in their two series (1848--1867) are not only satire and idyllic picture, but also a valuable philological contribution, with their careful display of the Yankee dialectic pronunciation and phraseology.

No other American poet has succeeded so constantly, and with such strong indication of high powers of observation and delineation of Yankee character, in portrayal of the New England men as they are. Take the excellent pictures in "Fitz-Adam's Story," the only printed part of a never-fulfilled plan for a group-poem to be entitled "The Nooning," and to be composed of serious or humorous tales in verse. The chief of these pictures is a personification of Yankee stinginess in a hypocritic garb—a type sadly familiar. In other pictures, however, and very often, Lowell fully and aptly and most justly sets before us the rustic folk-mind in its strength, shrewdness, helpful kindness, and simple reliance on God and self. The characteristics which reached their utmost manifestation in the face of Emerson will not be lost to literature so long as Lowell's poetical works continue to be read. In this regard the poet was born in the right place at the right time.

Delineation of Yankee character.

Lowell's heart-words, when uttered against slavery or political war, or in delineation of rural life or natural beauty, have been heard with something like the general welcome accorded to his rollicking productions in the vein of wit or

humor. As a sentimentalist, however, his public has been more limited than Longfellow's or Whittier's. From his verse of sentiment or imagination or more frequent fancy one can select a goodly list of meritorious poems, but most of them are not widely known. They are not indispensable, as the best poetry must always be, and as his "Auf Wiedersehen," "Das Ewig-Weibliche," "The Changeling," "The First Snow-Fall," "The Courtin'," "After the Burial," "The Miner," and "Ode Recited at the Harvard Commemoration" seem to be. Most of us would be content to have written these eight alone, or even the last, the best American poem of occasion, and the chief literary result of the civil war. Such songs, lovely or noble, outweigh the store of thought in "The Cathedral," or the richly varied nature-panorama in the second series of "The Biglow Papers," quaintly and modestly entitled "Sunthin' in the Pastoral Line."

Lowell's best lyrics.

Notwithstanding his high success in the "Commemoration Ode," Lowell has not always shown the confident powers which the ode-maker must possess. The ambitious ode on Agassiz is valuable for its portraits of the subject and his friends, but the metrical system seems overcumbrous; where success is won it is in spite of the system, not because of it. Lowell is usually strongest where he is freest, as in the felicitous personal "Epistle to George William Curtis." In the sonnet, however, he is

Man and artist.

not fettered by a form that too severely binds some others; but he finds within its "narrow room" ample chance to express political admiration or scorn, or to make such tender tributes as are offered in the "Bankside" series to the memory of Edmund Quincy, one of the true gentlemen in American thought and letters. Despite his extensive readings and studies in English and continental poetry, the personality of Lowell dominates that which he writes; we are almost always conscious of the man and his mind; no artistic result eliminates him and leaves us only the work.

The secret of Lowell's Successes and Failures.

Mr. Lowell's productions, from first to last, both in verse and in prose, have occasionally been subjected to severe or violent critical condemnation. Even the "Commemoration Ode" has been most contemptuously characterized by an able but eccentric English poet and scholar whose vocabulary contains no adjectives midway between "heavenly" and "devilish." We have been told, by various writers, of his mixed metaphors; culinary comparisons; inconsistencies of utterance; willingness to introduce coarse jokes more akin to the wild western "humorist" than the Cambridge scholar; and use of forced rhymes worthy of a country bardling or the intensest modern mediævalist. These faults, which must at times be recognized and plainly described, really spring from the very qualities of alertness and freshness of speech which make Lowell the poet both of

scholars and of a part, at least, of the common people. It is hard to distinguish, sometimes, between a "more than Shakespearean felicity" and a dangerous carelessness, individuality, or obscurity. Lowell approaches all these things; and for this very reason few of his critics agree in their lists of his best and worst productions. He writes, furthermore, for his own time; a more selfish or discreet bard—a Bowles or a Rogers—would have left us a trim little book of metrical reflections, without the lyrical grace, and without those faults which poor N. P. Willis very aptly called "hurrygraphs." But I, for one, am willing to give up neither the quick sparkle nor the lasting worth, neither such dialect wit nor such a scholarly introduction as may be found in the second Biglow series. It might be better to separate the 'prentice-work and time-work from the results of art, long and true; Lowell has not separated them, but neither did Wordsworth, nor Shakespeare himself, whose art was sometimes worse than his hack writing for the expectant play-house. Lowell, more than calm Emerson, gentle Longfellow, blatant, bustling Whitman, cold Bryant, or unhuman Poe, writes at once as man and scholar, wit and artist, reformer and poetic maker. Therefore Whittier and Lowell reap the American reward, while they lose some sprays of the Greek laurel. Of either of them might be said, as Lowell wrote of Abraham Lincoln:

A Poet of the time.

His was no lonely mountain-peak of mind,
Thrusting to thin air o'er our cloudy bars,
A sea-mark now, now lost in vapors blind;
Broad prairie rather, genial, level-lined,
Fruitful and friendly for all human kind,
Yet also nigh to heaven and loved of loftiest stars.

The time will come, I presume, when two hundred million English-reading people will occupy the present territory of the United States. Literature does not necessarily grow with numbers or wealth—the greatest glory of the greatest of the world's literatures is still the Elizabethan English. We shall then, however, have ample leisure for a serener art. In the teeming years of the future, American authors will hardly be forced, or tempted by their ready zeal, into works so multifarious as those of Lowell in these early and shaping days of American letters. A booklet designed to aid in a thorough study of his writings discusses them under the several heads of nature; the poetic ideal; a "portrait gallery" of thirty or forty authors delineated in his verse; legends, history and religion. In the historical division the claim is made, and justly, that, "Lowell's patriotic verse lights every part of our national chronicle; there are poems about the discoverers, the forefathers, the men of '76, the nation from 1787 to 1820, the rise of abolitionism, the annexation of Texas and the Mexican War, the 'Irrepressible Conflict,' the Commemoration Ode, the reconstruction." Such a range of subjects would be impossible for some poets, and

The American Song.

dangerous to all; but Lowell bears the test with substantial success,—a success somewhat more lasting than the swift and earnest singer expected in youth. "Unless to thought is added will," says Emerson, "Apollo is an imbecile"; this Cambridge Apollo adds will to thought, and produces a result distinctly American, and often distinctly poetic. His full mind and ready pen turn without hesitation from the practical to the ideal; now they pack into four lines a somewhat strenuous argument for international copyright:—

> In vain we call old notions fudge,
> And bend our conscience to our dealing,
> The Ten Commandments will not budge,
> And stealing *will* continue stealing,—

and now he peers toward the ultimate home of poetry and religion, Shelley's "land where music and moonlight and feeling are one," of which Lowell sings:

> Happier to chase a flying goal
> Than to sit counting laurelled gains,
> To guess the soul within the soul
> Than to be lord of what remains.
>
> Hide still, best good, in subtile wise,
> Beyond my nature's utmost scope;
> Be ever absent from mine eyes
> To be twice present in my hope!

To refuse to try to separate wheat from chaff in Lowell's rich garner would be to abdicate the critical function. I have faithfully, however imperfectly, endeavored to search for the soul of the

poet behind his varying songs and philosophic verses. The endeavor is that which Lowell himself has more successfully made in his criticisms of European singers. As he has told us: "Not failure, but low aim, is crime." His aim is high and his failure non-essential as compared with his success. Two lines in "The Cathedral," a poem worthy of Browning, remind us that "The Cathedral."

> God is in all that liberates and lifts,
> In all that humbles, sweetens, and consoles;

and he is therefore in Lowell's verse. And the didactic is not less welcome, nor more, than the pure spirit of poesy phrased in the same profoundly meditative poem:

> The bird I hear sings not from yonder elm;
> But the flown ecstasy my childhood heard
> Is vocal in my mind, renewed by him,
> Haply made sweeter by the accumulate thrill
> That threads my undivided life and steals
> A pathos from the years and graves between.

In divine thought and in human perception, thus phrased, in the three quotations last made, Lowell recalls and restates for us the very secret of existence, taught by seer and poet to man in his upward march. Whittier, too, in unmystic and simple phrase, has many a time unriddled this mystery:

> Beneath the moonlight and the snow
> Lies dead my latest year;
> The winter winds are wailing low
> Its dirges in my ear.

I grieve not with the moaning wind
As if a loss befell;
Before me, even as behind,
God is, and all is well!

His light shines on me from above,
His low voice speaks within,—
The patience of immortal love
Outwearying mortal sin.

Whittier and Lowell, our poets of freedom, could not have sung the American song had they not learned and interpreted to a willing folk the same lesson of the higher and poetic optimism which underlay Emerson's every line. Such men must be reformers, but their earthly battles are fought beneath a heavenly star.

The name of Oliver Wendell Holmes is naturally and honorably associated with those of Whittier and Lowell as that of our third poet of freedom and culture. His literary life began with a ringing lyric of patriotism, easily surpassing the best of the revolutionary songs. The English-reading world well knows those indignant verses, flung forth in answer to a proposal to dismantle the frigate Constitution, or "Old Ironsides":

Oliver Wendell Holmes, b. 1809.

Ay, tear her tattered ensign down!
Long has it waved on high,
And many an eye has danced to see
That banner in the sky;
Beneath it rung the battle-shout,
And burst the cannon's roar;—
The meteor of the ocean air
Shall sweep the clouds no more!

Her deck, once red with heroes' blood,
Where knelt the vanquished foe,
When winds were hurrying o'er the flood,
And waves were white below,
No more shall feel the victor's tread,
Or know the conquered knee;—
The harpies of the shore shall pluck
The eagle of the sea!

Oh, better that her shattered hulk
Should sink beneath the wave;
Her thunders shook the mighty deep,
And there should be her grave;
Nail to the mast her holy flag,
Set every threadbare sail,
And give her to the god of storms,—
The lightning and the gale!

Not less intense, though more sober and restrained, is the noble song which Holmes wrote forty years later for the ceremonies attending the laying of the corner-stone of Harvard's great Memorial Hall, built in honor of her sons slain in the Civil War. Here is the American mind, and here the unmistakable touch of true poetry. In the swing of these stately and musical lines are the fervor of patriotism and the calm restraint of academic contemplation, the latter tempering the former, but never quenching a single heat-ray of forceful devotion. Holmes, within these sixteen lines, was performing the same service done by Lowell in his great Ode; he was laying the laurel of learning upon the reddened sword of national honor:

Not with the anguish of hearts that are breaking
Come we as mourners to weep for our dead;
Grief in our breasts has grown weary of aching,
Green is the turf where our tears we have shed.

While o'er their marbles the mosses are creeping,
Stealing each name and its legend away,
Give their proud story to Memory's keeping,
Shrined in the temple we hallow to-day.

Hushed are their battle-fields, ended their marches,
Deaf are their ears to the drum-beat of morn,—
Rise from the sod, ye fair columns and arches!
Tell their bright deeds to the ages unborn!

Emblem and legend may fade from the portal,
Keystone may crumble and pillar may fall;
They were the builders whose work is immortal,
Crowned with the dome that is over us all!

There were poets at Harvard a generation ago! Mr. Stedman well says of Holmes, in his essay on that poet: "Though the most direct and obvious of the Cambridge group, the least given to subtilties, he is our typical university poet; the minstrel of the college that bred him, and within whose liberties he has jested, sung, and toasted, from boyhood to what in common folk would be old age. Alma Mater has been more to him than to Lowell or Longfellow,—has occupied a surprising portion of his range; if we go back to Frere and Canning, even to Gray, for his like, there is no real prototype." But Holmes, "always a university poet," is a singer of freedom as well as of culture. "When the Civil War broke out, this conservative poet, who had taken

little part in the agitation that preceded it, shared in every way the spirit and duties of the time. None of our poets wrote more stirring war lyrics during the conflict, none has been more national so far as loyalty, in the Websterian sense, to our country and her emblems is concerned. He always has displayed the simple instinctive patriotism of the American minute-man." *

" The " scholar in politics," or in national life, does not always show the aggressive radicalism of the young Lowell; and Holmes did not share in all the intense pioneer reforms in statecraft, religion, and social life, which were promoted by some of his friends and literary contemporaries in Massachusetts. But no one can long read in any one of his books, prose or verse, without discovering that he is patriot, Unitarian, and republican, though not radical abolitionist, " free-religionist," or phalansterist. The " Autocrat," " Professor," and " Poet " at the Breakfast-Table, those original and valuable books of essay-talk, display the man and his mind in round and attractive completeness; and they show that the books are the author, and the author a nineteenth-century American in thought and outlook. What I mean will be apparent to every reader of the Autocrat series, and it is hardly less apparent in Holmes' novels: " Elsie Venner," " The Guardian Angel," and " A Mortal Antipathy." These books, in their fresh-

Wholesome American conservatism.

* " Poets of America," 276–7, 298–9.

ness, alertness, and brilliancy of delineation, are thoroughly of New England; they could not have been written in another land; and their descriptions and their solid (and yet progressive) discreetness of thought are representative of the soil and the time. Common sense—the Franklinian quality—has no better representative; and it is this very common-sense that prevents Holmes from reaching the highest success in fiction. "The Guardian Angel" narrowly escapes being a great novel; but in it, as in the less meritorious "Elsie Venner" and the weaker "Mortal Antipathy," the author's personality invades the artistic field. Every page or two he interrupts the narrative to make a thrust at religious orthodoxy or medical heterodoxy; to discuss his favorite theme of atavism; or to utter, like his own Master Byles Gridley, a few "thoughts on the universe." His themes are half Hawthornesque, but their treatment is that of the analytical and tersely didactic Harvard professor. The man behind the machine is an inartistic spectacle, in prose fiction, even if the man is mindful and masterly. The personality that is a delightful companion in the essays, and a "guide, philosopher, and friend" in the biographies of Motley and Emerson, intrudes in the pages of what should be a novel or a romance. The contents of the minor volumes of essays—"Soundings from the Atlantic," "Currents and Counter-Currents in Medical Science,"

Holmes' essays and novels.

"Mechanism in Thought and Morals," etc.,—will not keep within their covers, but spread into the would-be artistic product.

The personal element, however, is ever welcome in the poems, and I may add indispensable. Holmes has kinship with Hood, Praed, Thackeray, and even Pope, *mutatis mutandis*, as also with Montaigne, Sterne and Lamb. Such a singer must be intimately and constantly connected with his song. He is pre-eminently a lyrist of humor, pathos, and occasion; and poets of this class are poets who put their individual selves into iambus and trochee. They instruct while they amuse, and their personal attractiveness is transmuted into poetic force. They are spectators of the comedies and tragedies that make up life: Balzacs in theme, but treating their themes with somewhat of the heart and humanity that spontaneously sang themselves in the lyrics of Burns. Something akin to affection connects such poets and their readers, when poet and reader are at their best. They cannot be Shelleys, but they win by warmth though they dazzle not by splendor. The wit of Holmes is human as well as intellectual, though it stops far short of the vulgar or the sensational elements which are the bane of the lower American fun, and sometimes of the higher. Whatever Holmes writes is not only manly and characteristic, but characteristic of the man. His themes and methods are sufficiently varied, but they are all

Personality of Holmes' poems.

closely connected with the author of "Every Man his own Boswell." Variety and quick wholesome suggestiveness and helpfulness in the poems come from the same qualities in their writer.

Holmes the lyrist.

Before speaking of his pathos and humor, and of his voluminous and here-unsurpassed occasional verse, one notes at the start that of all the company of American singers, after Poe, the two who versify most swiftly and sweetly, our American *improvisatori*, are Holmes and Bayard Taylor. Lyrical grace and aptness are theirs; and one of them is likely to be our chosen singer when we want not Longfellow's sympathy, Bryant's austerity, Lowell's incisiveness, Emerson's masterful thought. This singing power gives pleasure in Holmes' rollicking descriptions and bits of mere fun; his after dinner sallies; his ephemeral contemporary satires; his best songs of occasion, like the noble Harvard hymn just quoted; and his downright masterpieces, "The Last Leaf" or "The Chambered Nautilus."

In its humblest estate this lyrical power is the pleasing jingle which properly accompanies and increases the pleasure derived from the telling phrases of the occasional poems. There is a legitimate enjoyment in sing-song, the border-line between which and scansion is not easily traced. One enjoys reading aloud, with somewhat undue stress of accent, the least ambitious of Holmes' clever rhymes, such as

Where, O where are life's lilies and roses,
  Nursed in the golden dawn's smile?
Dead as the bulrushes round little Moses,
  On the old banks of the Nile.

Where are the Marys and Anns and Elizas,
  Loving and lovely of yore?
Look in the columns of old Advertisers,—
  Married and dead by the score.

This easy verbal music is as legitimate in its way as Swinburne's or Poe's, as Moore's or Scott's. Holmes intentionally plays with a lyrical faculty that is ready to do his bidding in more stately and splendid, more devout and inspiring verse:—

Say not the Poet dies!
  Though in the dust he lies,
He cannot forfeit his melodious breath,
  Unsphered by envious death!
Life drops the voiceless myriads from its role;
  Their fate he cannot share,
  Who, in the enchanted air
Sweet with the lingering strains that Echo stole,
  Has left his dearer self, the music of his soul!*

Her hands are cold; her face is white;
  No more her pulses come and go;
Her eyes are shut to life and light:—
  Fold the white vesture, snow on snow,
  And lay her where the violets blow.†

Not less serenely musical are those sacred songs that are like oases in the deserts of the hymn-

* Poem at the dedication of the Halleck monument, July 8, 1869.
† "Under the Violets."

books: "O Love Divine, that stooped to share," and "Lord of all being, throned afar." Many a time does the reader of Holmes' verse, in its changing tones, speak to it as did its author to the fountain at Stratford-on-Avon:

> Welcome, thrice welcome is thy silvery gleam,
> Thou long imprisoned stream!
> Welcome the tinkle of thy crystal beads
> As plashing rain-drops to the flowery meads,
> As summer's breath to Avon's whispering reeds!

Occasional verse.

The writer of poems of occasion, like the after-dinner orator, must pay a high price for immediate applause. He gets hearty laughter and spontaneous praise, at the expense of being called merely "clever" or "neat." A great event sometimes, though rarely, calls forth a great poem; but occasional verse seldom lives long. The collected edition of Holmes' poems contains no less than thirty-two pieces connected with the reunions or the deaths of his Harvard class of '29, and some seventy-five more called forth by Phi Beta Kappa anniversaries, centennials, medical meetings, birthday feasts, scenes of welcome and farewell, theatre-openings, and similar seasons. His writing is largely "Rhymes of an Hour," as he modestly entitled one of his collections. It cannot live, for the adequate reason that most of it is not re-read. Originality, brilliancy, the surprise which is the essence of wit, rhythmical melody, cannot save it. But its sum-total of agreeable memories

"Rhymes of an Hour."

has materially and justly been added to our appreciation of the merit of the author's more ambitious and enduring verse. These occasional poems, like the lyrics destined for longer life, are eminently free from imitativeness. The emancipation of American letters from foreign fashions—not necessarily from foreign thought—owes much to Doctor Holmes' sturdy and successful, because natural, display of independent genius. The "cleverness" of this characteristic writer, not less than his deeper pathos and humor, has played its part in the intellectual movement of his time; it has made it easier for everybody to follow his own bent and say his own say. Holmes' occasional poems have simply amused hundreds of delighted hearers, most of whom have hardly stopped, at the moment, to think of any higher result; but sooner or later they reflect that here is more than an individual neatness, here are an alertness and daring felicity that have in them something national. It is even apparent elsewhere; for an English writer, whose name I know not, has justly associated, in this regard, "Mr. Lowell and Dr. Holmes—men who combine the culture of the Old World with the indefinable and incommunicable spirit of the New."

Holmes masterpieces.

As I turn over the leaves of Holmes' complete poetical works, I find just half-a-dozen poems which stand out most in my mind as significant: "The Last Leaf," "The Chambered Nautilus," "The Voiceless," "The Deacon's Masterpiece," "Æstivation," and

"Homesick in Heaven." "The Last Leaf" is one of those creations which are struck off at a heat and remain unique in literature. That union of pathos and humor which distinguishes every great wit is manifestly here, expressed with the novelty of form which must be added to naturalness of picture, if the word-painter would make a highly significant impression:

I saw him once before,
As he passed by the door.
And again
The pavement stones resound,
As he totters o'er the ground
With his cane.

They say that in his prime,
Ere the pruning-knife of Time
Cut him down,
Not a better man was found
By the Crier on his round
Through the town.

But now he walks the streets,
And he looks at all he meets
Sad and wan,
And he shakes his feeble head,
That it seems as if he said,
"They are gone."

The mossy marbles rest
On the lips that he has prest
In their bloom.
And the names he loved to hear
Have been carved for many a year
On the tomb.

My Grandmamma has said—
Poor old lady, she is dead
Long ago—
That he had a Roman nose,
And his cheek was like a rose
In the snow.

But now his nose is thin,
And it rests upon his chin
Like a staff,
And a crook is in his back,
And a melancholy crack
In his laugh.

I know it is a sin
For me to sit and grin
At him here;
But the old three-cornered hat,
And the breeches, and all that,
Are so queer!

And if I should live to be
The last leaf upon the tree
In the spring,
Let them smile, as I do now,
At the old forsaken bough
Where I cling.

I must remember that these pages attempt to present a history, not an anthology; but the quaintly successful poem repeats itself in my ear. This "Last Leaf" is printed on the first leaf of the collected edition of Holmes' poems; but it will indeed be the last to fall, for such an artless piece of art, such a rare union of unadorned humor and tendor pathos cannot die. Poe (in *The Pioneer* for March, 1843) made it the subject

of an elaborated metrical analysis, in which his well-known skill in scansion failed to present a proper scheme, notwithstanding his patient discussion and elaborate nomenclature.* The music of the pathetic song, in its author's mind, was

> "More of feeling than of hearing,
> Of the heart than of the ear,"—

it sung itself, like the best of Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads." Scansion, the botanizing of poetry, is a fit and needful study, but sometimes it is well to let the poem and the flower alone in their beauty. "The Last Leaf" is a lily which neither Poe nor I can paint.

"The Chambered Nautilus," originally printed in the "Autocrat," is one of the illustrations of Holmes' occasional fondness for the measures of the ode, which he might have used, had he wished, more often, and with an evident success. To write an ode is as hard as to write blank verse, but more than once does Holmes show the promise and potency of a triumph never fully essayed. Meanwhile he here achieves a success hardly less: that of writing a poem of self-evident beauty, inculcating a moral lesson. "The Voiceless" is a laurel-wreath of recognition and reward, laid upon the grave of mute, anonymous human

* This analysis had a curious history. It was not retained in the collected edition of Poe's works; a part of the manuscript was given after many years to Dr. Holmes by Robert Carter, one of the editors of *The Pioneer*, who had evidently forgotten how it came into his possession; and this part was reprinted as unpublished matter in the introduction to an illustrated edition of "The Last Leaf," 1885.

suffering. "Homesick in Heaven," in its idea, suggests a parallel with Rossetti's "Blessed Damozel," but is manifestly an outgrowth of the author's own thought, which more than once had touched upon some kindred theme. Here, as seldom occurs when such a thought rises in Holmes' mind, the execution falls manifestly below the idea.

Of all the many humorous poems produced by Holmes in half-a-century, my favorites are "The Deacon's Masterpiece" and "Æstivation." The first, with its swift movement, its Yankee spirit, its country pictures, its *sui generis* catastrophe, and its delicious ultimate line—"Logic is logic That's all I say"—is faultless fun. The second poem one longs to send back the ages, or beyond the "iron gate" of which Holmes afterward sang, to that true prose-poet and heartful old English doctor, Sir Thomas Browne, whose chief writings James T. Fields once aptly dedicated to John Brown and Oliver Wendell Holmes.

Holmes' career.

As the literary career of Doctor Holmes is viewed from the close of the century it so nearly covers, one perceives that he has been a poet as well as a humorist, a teacher as well as a "man-pleaser," if I may use the word in an innocent sense. This specially representative Bostonian poet has been a natural and catholic singer, and he has constantly upheld right canons of living. Bigotry, of many names, is saddened by the reflection that his books are not wholly mortal. Manliness finds in him a friend,

and culture a companion. Though as a poet he is almost great but assuredly not great, while as a prose essayist he must ever stand below the greater American whose biography he wrote, his place on the shelf is characteristic and likely to remain undusty. A later Franklin in riper days, he has added to the valuable part of creative literature, while he has shown how an intense and perpetual localism, under the touch of a true though narrow genius, and aided by culture, may earn a place in the world's republic of letters.

CHAPTER VII.

TONES AND TENDENCIES OF AMERICAN VERSE.

AFTER poetry in America could make some boasts in the matter of quantity, and even in that of quality in a lesser degree, it was struck by that wave of sentimentality which, following the legitimate revival of romanticism, had submerged so much of the English literary field. I need not stop to say that when poetry ceases to express sentiment it will die; and that Heine and Longfellow need not retreat before criticism or classicism or any other rival spirit in modern song. The prevalent lack of sentiment is a fault in Emerson's verse, notwithstanding its obvious power; while the presence of deep, true feeling in poets like Shelley or Keats increases the royal splendor of the one and the Hellenic grace of the other. But sentiment that consists in part of bombast, Parnassian attitudinizing or extravagant apostrophe is not usually a thing which the centuries value. Nor, when these things are absent, is it a mark of the greatest genius to express the cheaply obvious in thinly tinkling rhymes. "Feeling," to be sure, is better than indifferentism, and if either heart or brain must depart from letters we will dismiss the latter first; but we prefer imagination to that quality which

Sentimentality.

the old novelists called "sensibility." In American sentimental verse, forty or fifty years ago, it is not difficult to discover the objectionable qualities just named; and the general absence of the element of imagination has already banished it to the forgotten land once occupied by Mrs. Hemans, "L. E. L." and Eliza Cook.

Nathaniel Parker Willis, 1807–1867.

It should fairly be admitted, at the start, that in the poems of Willis and Mrs. Sigourney, as well as of Mrs. Frances S. Osgood and the lesser lights, there is something of high thought, sincere feeling, occasional effective utterance, and poetic touch. The time-spirit of a sentimental age was not so foolish as to be utterly misled in its enthusiasms. From Willis and Mrs. Sigourney can readily be selected a few poems that have survived the critical contempt, or indifference worse than contempt, which followed upon a temporary fame once equalling Longfellow's and far surpassing Emerson's. Willis, and not Bryant, was the typical New York poet, forty years since; while in distant country towns his metrical paraphrases of the Bible, his verses of observation, and his lyrics of affection and reflection, had a hearty welcome among men and women whose devout or secular aspirations and emotions had not elsewhere found so apt expression. But that is all; his "Poems Sacred, Passionate, and Humorous" are mostly forgotten, in their three divisions; and his many books of once-enjoyable stories and sketches of life and travel have gone the way of the dead

magazines and newspapers in which some of them were printed. He chose, though possessed of brilliancy, to be affected and hurried, and paid the penalty. Not even the discreet endeavors of his biographer, Professor Beers, could popularize the best of these prose productions in a recently-selected volume; the ordinary reader knows little more of Willis than the not unmeritorious scriptural pieces upon Absalom and Hagar in the Wilderness, and the lyric beginning "The shadows lay along Broadway," which Poe (whom Willis nobly befriended) so heartily admired, and in which he found a true imagination and an impressive grace, dignity, and pathos. Willis was a sort of lesser Southey, in his money-making literary industry and facility in prose and verse, his occasional strength or music of utterance, and his beautiful and unjealous self-sacrifice in promoting the work and fame of other writers. He was a power not to be ignored in the development of letters in New York.

Among Willis' contemporaries, beloved by many readers who sincerely believed that they were "fond of poetry," were some men and more women who were capable of manufacturing verses that were occasionally pleasing, and of turning out rhymes in which the sense was not always sacrificed to the sound. Copious illustrations of their products may be found in that indispensable piece of pioneer industry, the Duyckincks' "Cyclopædia of American Literature," or in the still more voluminous anthologies of Rev. Rufus Wil-

mot Griswold. Upon many of them Poe bestowed a critical smile or frown. Their "poems" were declaimed by school-boys and pasted into the scrap-books of young lovers; and to this day some of them are warmly remembered by readers who cannot deem just the neglect which has enveloped them. Their one great merit was their tender heart; but not even this could cover their multitude of literary sins. In brief, they had most of the demerits of Mrs. Browning without her unquestionable genius. Their work was on the whole humbly beneficent, for it helped the general public in a transition time,—at least negatively, while it could not harm the abler minds, nor, in its nature, could it be lastingly mischievous. When I think of the genuine love of man and nature, the sincere moral helpfulness, and the half-a-hundred blameless volumes of Mrs. Sigourney, I regret that literary justice permits the critic to do no more than chronicle the death of her fame. But facts are inexorable; such verse cannot long outlive the contemporary fugitive prose; and obvious sentiment expressed with hurried facility is a mark of the humbler and more perishable forms of poetry. The epitaph of nearly all such productions, once deemed "contributions to American literature," is to be found, alas, in the first of Holmes' stanzas quoted on page 211.

Lydia Howard (Huntley) Sigourney, 1791–1865.

Literature, however great, does not take the place held by sentiment and religion in the hearts of the majority of mankind. Tastes and capaci-

ties, furthermore, are not always Shakesperean or Emersonian. Some of the successes of Longfellow and Whittier are merely the result of their attainment, by similar but more successful methods, of that which Willis and Mrs. Sigourney could but seek. Our best patriotic ballads and popular lyrics are of course based upon sentiment, aptly expressed by the poet and instinctively felt by the reader. Hence, just is the fame and true is the love bestowed upon the choicest songs of our "single-poem poets": upon Samuel Woodworth's "Old Oaken Bucket," Albert G. Greene's "Old Grimes is Dead," Thomas Dunn English's "Ben Bolt," George P. Morris' "Woodman, Spare that Tree," Coates Kinney's "The Rain upon the Roof," Mrs. Allen's "Rock me to Sleep, Mother," Julia Ward Howe's majestic "Battle Hymn of the Republic," Thomas Buchanan Read's "Sheridan's Ride," or Francis M. Finch's "The Blue and the Gray." Kinney, neither dazzled nor misled by the glow of spontaneous favor bestowed upon his best-known poem, continued through life to study and to polish, until, in his seventh decade, he collected, in a volume of no great size, poems so wise in optimistic thought and so definite in their varied artistic form that they would readily have given him fame in our early verse-days, fifty years agone. The American singers, with all their rush of enthusiasm, have not been utterly lacking in reserve, though too few have followed Kinney's sanely deliberate method.

Popular lyrics.

Coates Kinney, b. 1826.

To this select list of lyrics I must not allow personal preference to add the poems of the late Elbridge Jefferson Cutler, nor an anonymous tribute to "The Confederate Flag,"—the gem of the Southern poetry of the civil war.

A certain "seal of approval," though not a large one, has been set by popular verdict, and by the iterated opinion of competent critics or poetic associates, upon the "War Lyrics" of Henry Howard Brownell, almost the only Northern poet whose reputation, though a dwindling one, rests solely upon his vigorous lyrics and graphic descriptions of the great internecine struggle. His "Bay Fight" is a swiftly effective verse-story of Farragut's battle at Mobile, and might well be read beneath St. Gaudens' spirited statue of that great naval commander, whose deeds it enthusiastically commemorates in lines that can hardly stop to obey the stricter laws of scansion, but hurry along like those of a newspaper report of the engagement. Similar, but marked still more by the *currente calamo* manner, is Forceythe Willson's "Rhyme of the Master's Mate," describing the fresh-water conflict at Fort Henry. Appearing almost simultaneously with Brownell's lyrics, it was not unnaturally assigned, by some readers, to the same hand. Willson's "Old Sergeant" is better known, being, indeed, one of the most familiar of the civil war poems; but aside from its subject it is essentially less worthy of praise than Willson's "Autumn Song"

Henry Howard Brownell, 1820–1872.

Byron Forceythe Willson, 1837–1867.

"No More," or "The Voice"—the last is a poem which any writer might deem one of his successes, as measured by its fit union of thought and form.

Among all American songs of sentiment, none are more characteristic of the soil, none more genuine and spontaneous than the folk-songs of which both words and music were written by Stephen C. Foster. "The Old Folks at Home," "My Old Kentucky Home," and others scarcely less popular, voiced very sweetly and aptly the hopes and fears, the happy home-life and the bloody inexorable tragedy of the Southern slaves before the war. Both light and shade of African life are here—the sunny noontide joy and the midnight woe. The words, with their simple pictures of nature and their unsophisticated pathos, and the music, melodiously expressing the whole thought of the words, are of the land, the climate, and the time. The crude strength of the interesting and indigenous slave-songs of semi-Israelitish oppression and prophetic triumph seemed to serve as Foster's basis, upon which his art built symmetrical songs, all his own and yet such as the slaves, under more favorable conditions, might have framed for themselves. That Foster was a poet is proved—one is tempted to say—by a single line like

Stephen Collins Foster, 1826–1864.

> By'n by hard times comes a-knocking at the door

in "My Old Kentucky Home," which seems to me worth quoting entire, as a true poem:

The sun shines bright in the old Kentucky home,
'Tis summer, the darkies are gay;
The corn-top's ripe, and the meadow's in the bloom,
While the birds make music all the day.
The young folks roll on the little cabin floor,
All merry, all happy and bright;—
By'n by hard times comes a-knocking at the door,
Then my old Kentucky home, good-night!

Weep no more, my lady,
Oh! weep no more to-day!
We will sing one song for the old Kentucky home,
For the old Kentucky home, far away.

They hunt no more for the possum and the coon,
On the meadow, the hill, and the shore;
They sing no more by the glimmer of the moon,
On the bench by the old cabin door.
The day goes by like a shadow o'er the heart,
With sorrow, where all was delight:
The time has come when the darkies have to part,
Then my old Kentucky home, good-night!

The head must bow, and the back will have to bend,
Wherever the darkey may go:
A few more days, and the trouble all will end,
In the field where the sugar-canes grow.
A few more days for to tote the weary load,
No matter, 'twill never be light,
A few more days till we totter on the road,
Then my old Kentucky home, good-night!

Weep no more, my lady,
Oh! weep no more to-day!
We will sing one song for the old Kentucky home,
For the old Kentucky home, far away.

"The Old Folks at Home" is not less veritably a poem; and in its melody Foster created the

best musical composition as yet produced in a country that pours its gold into the pockets of European singers and players, but is even poorer than England in its original musical product. But music, as a rule, lags behind the other arts of civilization.

None but superficial critics or jaded readers insist that the only characteristic and original element in American literature is that which distinctly and constantly "smacks of the soil." We have traced the local and national idea through the development of American thought, and have noted its constant appearance in the writings of the greater American poets. One should not claim that this idea, definitely expressed, is the sole test of value and interest in verse; he should rather find in it a theme of occasional but genuine power, appearing as often as usual in other literatures, and displaying itself according to the varying influences of place, time, and man. Fidelity to scene and character explained the wide popularity which was won by Dr. Holland's narrative poem "Bitter-Sweet," and the more sentimental and less meritorious "Kathrina." In these, and in his readable and "native-American" novels,—"Miss Gilbert's Career," "The Story of Sevenoaks," etc.,—the author made wholesome national honesty and pluck, against that background of cheap rascality that is so easily to be found, a theme for descriptive verse and permissibly didactic fiction. None of our writers has

Poetry of the soil.

Josiah Gilbert Holland, 1819–1881.

better understood the average national heart. The real country-life of eastern America also appears in the novels of J. T. Trowbridge, whose "Neighbor Jackwood" surpasses any story by Holland as a prose-drama, faithful to the New England character and its environment. A wholesome and sympathetic portrayal of human nature underlies his best piece of fiction, "Coupon Bonds," and his most successful poem, "The Vagabonds," both of which take their place in the complex library of national delineation. Trowbridge sang of the homeless wanderer and his dog all the more effectively because he had elsewhere described so well the comfortable home-life of the American farmer's family. Tender knowledge is the groundwork for all success in folk-song. This "criticism of life" has been called the poet's theme; and it appears here and there even in the midst of the rollicking fun and inveterately multiplied puns of the burly, manly, friendly Vermonter Saxe, the facile humorist of a bygone day, who wrote at least one lyric worthy of Praed: "Wouldn't You Like to Know."

John Townsend Trowbridge, b. 1827.

John Godfrey Saxe, 1816–1887.

The essential unity of American life, increasing rather than diminishing as the great tide of population sweeps westward, is shown in such a book as Piatt's "Idyls and Lyrics of the Ohio Valley," in which man and landscape and tone are characteristically at one. The prairies of the westernland, and the sunshine and pathos of the full rural life of the broad interior states,

John James Piatt, b. 1835.

while they have a flavor of their own, in such idyls as these, are closely kin to the heart of Bayard Taylor's Pennsylvania ballads and Whittier's songs of New England. I like to turn to the admirably-drawn frontispiece to Mr. Piatt's "Idyls," and look long and half-reverently at the rough and homely yet characteristically manly and self-reliant face of Piatt's "Mower in Ohio," an incarnation, whether in picture or verse, of average American manhood.

The old man is making hay all alone,—

> "And only the bees are abroad at work with me in the clover here,"—

for he has sent his boys to triumph or to die with the Northern army. Meanwhile to Hayne and Timrod, far in the south, their deathless heroism seems paralleled by the devotion of the Confederate youth. With equal sincerity the laureates of blue and of gray were exclaiming, with Hayne, in those tumultuous years:

Paul Hamilton Hayne, 1831–1886.

> Look round us now; how wondrous, how sublime
> The heroic lives we witness; far and wide
> Stern vows by sterner deeds are justified;
> Self-abnegation, calmness, courage, power,
> Sway, with a rule august, our stormy hour,
> Wherein the loftiest hearts have wrought and died—
> Wrought grandly and died smiling.

But South and North seemed too benumbed with wound, or seared by fire, to sing many songs of fit honor and acclaim for the heroic living and

the martyred dead. Hayne's poems of peaceful life and lovely nature are better than his war-songs; and, indeed, his historical, Revolutionary "Battle of King's Mountain" is a nobler lyric than those he sang in the later strife.

The South has thus far produced but one poet of the first rank—Poe, though haply born in Boston and living in Philadelphia and New York, is to be ranked as a Southerner in his origins of ancestry and education. Of its singers of the second grade Hayne is chief; his verse displays the wealth and warmth of the landscape of South Carolina and Georgia, the loneliness of the "pine barrens" where nature seems unmolested, or the swish of the wild Southern sea. As a sonnetteer, too, his place is not far below Longfellow's; American achievements in this important division of verse have not been inconsiderable. When Hayne, for a short period in his life, fell under the influence of Morris-mediævalism, the merit of his verse dwindled to that of occasional lines or passages; but when he sang his own song in his own land it was that of a true poet, who heard

> "Low words of alien music, softly sung.
> And rhythmic sighs in some sweet unknown tongue."

Far from the distributing centres of literature, and unaided by the stimulus or the criticism that come alone from association with brother authors, Hayne wrote too much, nor polished with sufficiently painstaking art. Hard, too, is the lot of the bard whose whole life is devoted to

letters in a lonely land. I do not think, however, that deductions and limitations of excess or of failure can deny the poet's crown to him who wrote "Lethe," "Under Sentence," "Above the Storm," "Pre-existence," "Underground," "The Dryad of the Pine," "The Pine's Mystery," "Love's Autumn," "The Vision at Twilight," "The Inevitable Calm," "The Dead Look," "Over the Waters," "Forecastings," "The Visionary Face," the sonnets "At Last" and "Earth Odors after Rain," and the dramatic sketch "Antonio Melidori."

Another characteristic poet in Georgia was Henry Timrod, whose poems Hayne edited. His little book of verse is so good in its martial and general work, that it makes us speculate on the possibilities which might have come in a longer life of one whose inspiration was so vivid that he half expected the incarnate spirit of springtide to appear in rosy flesh before him, in his woodland walks, exclaiming,

Henry Timrod, 1829–1867.

"Behold me! I am May!"

The poetry of a third Confederate, Sidney Lanier, is dear to an audience fit and now more than few, which often cherishes the memory of the early dead singer in biographical sketch, memorial tablet, or commendatory verse. None can fail to recognize in his poems the time-spirit, the land-song, and the true poetic touch, especially in "The Marshes of Glynn," "Sunrise," "The Song

of the Chattahoochee," "The Mocking-Bird," or the more ambitious "Corn." His were a larger mind and a stronger hand than Timrod's or even Hayne's, yet his was a fatal fault: he lacked that spontaneity which is the chief pleasure in the verse of Hayne and Timrod. In the midst of the products of a genius that certainly at times seemed large, and that was bold to the extent of eccentricity, are the too-conspicuous signs of mere intellectual experiment and metrical or verbal extravaganza. Lanier theorizes in verse; the practice-hand seeks to strike chords than can only come from the impassioned and self-forgetful singer of nature and the soul. His analytical and exhaustive musical studies—applied to literature in "The Science of English Verse"—greatly harmed his creative work.

Sidney Lanier, 1842–1881.

The wild western scenes of the numerous poems of "Joaquin" Miller owe their success chiefly to the interest aroused (especially in England) by their descriptions of men and women and skies utterly unfamiliar to readers in the older environments. Miller is the Sierra minstrel, who, on the basis of a natural aptitude fortified by an enthusiastic study of Byron and Swinburne, easily sings of the romantic experiences of a rich *terra incognita*, where the dash and fire of personal life stand forth against the background of snowy mountain, —"lonely as God and white as a winter moon,"— darksome gulch, or tropical river. His poems

Cincinnatus Hiner Miller, b. 1841.

however, are but essays in song, perishable utterances of a freedom that must more slowly take to itself the lessons of lasting art.

Another phase of nineteenth-century verse in America, as marked and as characteristic as sentimentalism, the natural lyrical outburst, or the local idyl or romance, has been the poetry of thought and culture produced by men and women of a fame and power below Emerson's, who still have shared the influence of the various upward movements of the time. Thoreau, Jones Very, the younger Ellery Channing, John S. Dwight, Cranch, and Mrs. Hooper show how the broad Transcendental revival of 1840 affected minor verse of many tones,—now in the direction of religious or philosophic meditation, now in that of concise appeals for courageous activity in life, and yet again in mere reflection or observation of nature. The volumes of *The Dial*, with much that is simply quaint or hopelessly eccentric, contain verse of no small merit, and the books of some of the writers —they were not "singers"—just named are full of what seems, after all, essays toward poetry rather than poetry itself. Jones Very, a sort of Unitarian monk and mystic, packed into many a sonnet or meditative hymn rich and weighty words of reverence and consecration, which he deemed inspired by ghostly power from above, and which he wrote in implicit obedience to the spiritual voice within. Some of these poems are harmed by a semi-Buddhistic

Poetry of Thought and Culture.

Jones Very, 1813-1880.

Christian Quietism, as though Molinos had been incarnated anew in the Salem streets; others display the serene sure beauty of church-yard lilies. But the many preferred, and justly, a more obvious and rememberable phrasing of vital truth, such as Dwight made in his effective poem entitled "Rest:"

John Sullivan Dwight, b. 1813.

Sweet is the pleasure
  Itself cannot spoil!
Is not true leisure
  One with true toil?

Thou that wouldst taste it,
  Still do thy best;
Use it, not waste it—
  Else 'tis no rest.

Wouldst behold beauty
  Near thee? all round?
Only hath duty
  Such a sight found.

Rest is not quitting
  The busy career;
Rest is the fitting
  Of self to its sphere.

'Tis the brook's motion,
  Clear without strife,
Fleeing to ocean
  After its life.

Deeper devotion
  Nowhere hath knelt;
Fuller emotion
  Heart never felt.

'Tis loving and serving
The highest and best!
'Tis onwards! unswerving—
And that is true rest.

The gospel of life and eternity shines through these seven stanzas! Mrs. Ellen Sturgis Hooper, like Dwight, displayed to the Massachusetts circle of readers, in her brief life, the fact that culture was not incompatible with directness, earnestness, and reverence,—that, indeed, will must fertilize thought before thought can do its proper work in the world. The anthologies do not allow us to forget these half-dozen lines of hers, which I quote because they exactly show how Transcendental idealism set young Americans at work:

Ellen (Sturgis) Hooper, 1816–1841.

I slept, and dreamed that life was Beauty,
I woke, and found that life was Duty.
Was thy dream then a shadowy lie?
Toil on, sad heart, courageously;
And thou shalt find thy dream to be
A noonday light and truth to thee.

There is in Unitarianism a deeply devout spirit, as every reader of Bryant, Holmes, Longfellow, and such hymn-writers as Sir John Bowring, E. H. Sears and Mrs. Sarah Flower Adams well knows. The individualism and insight of the Transcendental movement was developing this spirit into a vital connection with literature, a connection to which other American books than those of Emerson and Thoreau are directly or

indirectly indebted. Cranch went straight to the heart of the whole matter,—to the heart of spiritual perception,—in his oft-quoted lines:

Christopher Pearse Cranch, b. 1813.

"Thought is deeper than all speech,
Feeling deeper than all thought;"

and when he immediately added:

"Souls to souls can never teach
What unto themselves was taught,"

he truly phrased the essential loneliness of innermost experience. But the success of Transcendentalism, notwithstanding all its follies, lay in the fact that in Emerson's words, and in those of some of his associates, the "inner light" of one was made the illumination of others.

One from whom much was expected, in the days of *The Dial*, was the younger Channing, nephew of the eminent divine. Emerson sent some of young Channing's verses to Carlyle, who found them "worthy indeed of reading"; the poem on "Death," in particular, being "the utterance of a valiant, noble heart," of which, in rhyme or prose, Carlyle thought to hear more in the future. The same crisp critic, in the letter to Emerson in which he spoke thus kindly, added this reflection: "Let a man try to the very uttermost to speak what he means, before singing is had recourse to. Singing, in our curt English speech, contrived expressly and almost exclusively for 'dispatch of business', is terribly difficult." The history of

William Ellery Channing, Jr., b. 1818.

English verse, from Chaucer to Tennyson, instantly refutes this statement; the advice, however, was salutary at a period when even the Transcendentalists were falling into the time-fault of diffuseness. Channing's Miltonic line

> "If my bark sinks, 'tis to another sea,"

like the best poetic product of Emerson, Thoreau, and their associates, was meritorious because it packed more thought in verse than prose could express. But no poet of his time is more addicted than Channing to the habit of maundering along through page after page of dull pseudo-poetry, like "The Wanderer" or "Eliot," never read by most and instantly forgotten by the patient few. Channing's thoughts are sometimes strong and new, and they are never contracted or tame; but when obscurity and ruggedness are added to prolixity we refuse to pardon the result, save in the case of one great poet of our time.

Edward Rowland Sill, 1841–1887.

A later singer, of limited but valuable achievement retained much of the Transcendental lordly view of thought and life, and made verse express in terse and remembrable words the proper application of ideals to daily duty. Read once more E. R. Sill's six lines on "Life":

> "Forenoon, and afternoon, and night,—Forenoon,
> And afternoon, and night,—Forenoon, and—what?
> The empty song repeats itself. No more?
> Yea, that is Life: make this forenoon sublime,
> This afternoon a psalm, this night a prayer,
> And Time is conquered, and thy crown is won."

The American poetry of pure intellect deals not in abstractions alone, nor yet does it assoil pure thought or degrade the ideal, when it "hitches its wagon to a star." Sill was able, within his sphere, to show the relations between idea and act, while offering an ennobling conception of both, in clear language and few words—an ability which has not been tiresomely common in New England.

Many of the contributors to *The Dial* were women; and one of its editors was Margaret Fuller. Among the Brook Farm group, however, and among such later singers as Alice and Phœbe Cary, Celia Thaxter, Margaret J. Preston, and Lucy Larcom—whatever the merit of their pleasing verse—none was the peer of Helen Jackson ("H. H."), whose name outranked, at the time of her death, that of any other American woman who ever claimed the name of poet. Mrs. Jackson had the characteristics of the *Dial* group at its best: deep and sincere thought, uttered for its own sake in verse not untinged by the poetic inspiration and touch. In her poems the influence of the mind is felt before that of the heart; they are reflective and suggestive, sometimes concisely argumentative. Certain phases and senses of spirit, brain, and nature lay long in the poet's thought, and at length found deliberate and apt expression in word and metre. The character of H. H.'s product is explained by the frequency with which she chose single words —often abstract nouns—as titles. It is medita-

Helen Maria (Fiske) Jackson, 1831–1885.

tive, not lyrical; it lacks spontaneity and outburst; the utter joyance of the poetry of nature and humanity, that will sing itself, is seldom present, even when nature and man are the themes. Large creative impulse is also absent. It is therefore poetry that never rises above the second class, but its place in that class is high. Emerson, whose aptly-titled and curious anthology "Parnassus" is chiefly valuable as a commentary on his own mind and writings, recognized some of the work of H. H. with a definite praise which he seldom bestowed upon a contemporary American. The poems he selected and lauded were constructed on lines partly parallel with his own, though far enough below. In them it would be unjust to say that feeling is absent, for H. H.'s feeling was true, if delicately and reservedly expressed. In such a poem as "Resurgam," one of the longest she ever wrote, philosophic trust becomes religious faith. Indeed, from the very earliest of her poems, the rugged blank verse which she wrote in 1865, after the death of her husband and two children, her writings are usually subjective and personal. It would be absurd to call merely cold and intellectual the author of the strong novel "Ramona"; which, with its precedent prose-work "A Century of Dishonor," fairly burns with a woman's just indignation at the wrongs suffered by the Indians. But the ardor of her poems is a quiet glow, it is not flame. One may read them with recognition, it may be with satisfaction or even admiration, but without enthusiasm.

Woman in Literature.

There can be no question that the work of woman in American literature, and chiefly in fiction and poetry, is hereafter to command a study as deep as that bestowed upon the work of men; but the fruitage of many seeds is not yet, though the flowers are beginning to appear. The time will come when such insight, philosophic observation, and pithiness as Mrs. Piatt's; such vital intensity as Miss Lazarus'; and such bright, gracious nature-chronicles as Miss Edith Thomas',—who has strayed from the Elizabethan days into ours,—will be but preludes to a chorus triumphant, many-voiced and long.

Sarah Morgan (Bryan) Piatt, b. 1836

Emma Lazarus, 1849–1887.

Edith Matilda Thomas, b. 1854.

The effect, upon some few of the more eminent American poets, of residence and study in France, Germany, or Italy is sufficiently manifest, and has elsewhere been discussed in the pages of this history. The national verse-product, however, has been little effected by Continental influences, so far as the most of our greater singers are concerned. The European impact upon the poems of Bryant (notwithstanding his translations), Holmes, Whittier, Emerson, Poe, and Whitman was not strong, and Longfellow alone returned from the Old World with his mind and genius saturated with the wine of mediæval romance and modern Continental literature. The prose-works of our many literary diplomats have shown a more potent effect of foreign study than is visible in the writings of the poets who have

The European impact.

trodden the ancient fields. In some few cases, however, the arts of the painter and the poet have been joined in the same person, as in Allston, Cranch, and Read; as those of the sculptor and poet have been displayed by Story. For such men an Italian residence has been almost a necessity, and thus, in the nineteenth century, American literature has been in some slight way affected by that land which so mightily taught England after the Norman conquest had opened the doors of the Continent to the singers and scholars of our mother-tongue. Story, a Harvard graduate, son and biographer of the eminent commentator on the Constitution, William Wetmore Story, b. 1819. began his career as a lawyer, but soon turned to sculpture and song, and became a permanent resident of Italy. His dramatic studies, of which "A Roman Lawyer in Jerusalem," "A Jewish Rabbi in Rome," and the repulsively strong "Cleopatra" are the chief, display a philosophic strength or a passionate fire rare indeed in a division of literature to which other Americans have made but feeble additions. Method and result occasionally suggest Browning, but only because the scenes and the historic thought of Italy seem naturally to have affected two minds in somewhat similar ways. A few of Story's delicate and muse-born lyrics, such as "In the Moonlight," "In the Rain," "Love and Death," and "In the Garden," are of the poet's own land—not merely Italy's, but Ariel's and Endymion's. Yet, notwithstanding the manlier

tone of "Io Victis" (the thought of which Holmes better sang in "The Voiceless"), and "After Many Days," Story's sweetly verbose melancholy becomes monotonous, as in all other followers of Heine save Longfellow. "Sunrise" and "Moonrise" are longer poems that seem based upon Shelley, but result in a sort of combination of Whitman and Sidney Lanier. His books of verse, as a whole, present no more than suggestive or pleasing material, not wrought into a true and lasting result.

Thomas William Parsons, b. 1819.

A somewhat fuller and more symmetrical though equally limited poetic success is that of Dr. Parsons, who was born in the same year with Story and Lowell, and who, in his life-task of Dante-translation, has turned again and again toward the sunny land in which his brother-poet lives. Parsons' place among American poets has always been peculiar; he has been ignored by the many but prized by a little public composed for the most part of those who are themselves poets. The plain brown-covered book of his "Poems" (1854), worn and shabby now, is often found in hands that have themselves written verse as praiseworthy as that of its author. In its best page, that containing the lines "On a Bust of Dante," he exclaims:

> "O Time! whose verdicts mock our own,
> The only righteous judge art thou."

This judge, in a generation, has not established Dr. Parsons' reputation on any other basis than

that on which may stand a minor poet of thought and grace; nor will Parsons sing for a larger future. To-day his books hold forth some few finely-wrought verses, enriched by culture, adorned by the touch of beauty, and occasionally illumined by the light of the land of Dante's vision, described by Dr. Parsons in his "Paradisi Gloria":

> "There is a city builded by no hand,
> And unapproachable by sea or shore,
> And unassailable by any band
> Of storming soldiery forevermore."

The latest Italian influence upon American verse is to be found in the work of Gilder, collected in three volumes: "The New Day," "The Celestial Passion," and "Lyrics." The title of the first at once suggests that of Dante's "New Life,"—noblest and most beautiful of all the contributions ever made by Love to literature. In form and spirit, as well as in name, Gilder shows how reverently and sympathetically he has studied the prose and verse of that artistic and picturesque old band of singers whom Rossetti grouped as "Dante and his Circle." Sincerity, conscientious and unworldly art, a devotion half-religious toward the soul of an earthly love, and an attitude of rapt and almost pietistic devoutness toward the maker of that physical world whose riddle is transfigured and so made plain by unworldly affection—these were the qualities of the mighty, sad, and yet

Richard Watson Gilder, b. 1844.

serenely happy Florentine; and these are the things that his followers in every age would show. The self-respecting and unswerving loyalty of this young singer toward his verbal art, and toward the spirit that shapes his song, is praiseworthy. He is in some ways a poet of his city and his time; but more than either, to him, are the long verities of his craft. His sincerity not unseldom shapes itself in a worthy utterance; some of his sonnets have a fit body for an inspiring thought; and an occasional blank-verse fragment such as the poem entitled "Recognition," or a terse lyric worthy of being read by Landor, approves the maker's art. Aim and plan, however, as yet outrun achievement in Gilder's books, which are not free from excrescences, fettered imitations, failures to reach the sought result, or grotesque juvenilities like two much-laughed-at sonnets in "The New Day." "Follow, follow," is still the word of his muse; and there is no unwillingness in the mind thus bidden.

American poetry to-day.

The later and living poets of America, as the nineteenth century draws to a close, hardly find themselves in the position occupied by their predecessors, forty years ago. "The stories have all been told," says a realistic critic of fiction; we cannot aver that "the songs have all been sung," but it is certain that the first national outburst has not been followed by a second as great. It could not be, for the flowering came after two centuries of dull and inconspicuous preparation and germination. Again,

in England itself the romantic revival of 1800 has long since spent its force, and the later Tennyson and Browning loom up lone in a chorus of triolet-makers, with few save Arnold, Swinburne, and Morris between their stature and that of the little crowd. The tides of literature, and especially of poetry, rise and fall though time goes on; progress and readjustment will sooner or later fill the places of Emerson, Longfellow, and Poe. Meanwhile many a noble note is struck half unheard, in the maturer history of American verse, which would have sounded clear and fine in the early poverty-stricken days when everybody who could manufacture a couplet,—pious, patriotic, or sentimental,—was forthwith deemed a poet. There was no more than one American writer, before Bryant, who could have conceived or expressed in a dozen pages, such thoughts, for instance, as Henry Abbey puts into two lines like these:

> "Read the round sky's star-lettered page, or grope
> In the abysses of the microscope;"*

nor could the combined talent of the whole company of our imaginative writers before Drake (always excepting Freneau) have produced a poem so good as the same author's "Irak"; yet Abbey is a comparatively obscure poet. One of ten thousand massed flowers is less distinguisha-

* "Science and the Soul."

ble than a single weed blossom here and there. But broad prodigality will sometime produce a Milton or at least a Keats:

"Come hither, Muse, rest on our Western shore;
The sea is narrow, and the time is come.
Heart, home and freedom, and thine English tongue
Have builded here. Thou shalt have room and love.
What shady nook, what sunlit stream is yon,
But we here sunnier, shadier? Younger lands,
And greener woods and songs of peace are here." †

I have been considering some names of living singers, but as connected with tendencies the force of which is for the most part spent. Now that I turn to the immediately present names of the second poetic period, I cannot refrain from putting at the head of the list the name of Bayard Taylor, though he went hence now a decade ago. The dissipating and almost destroying tendencies of modern intellectual life, especially in new and multifarious America, seemed almost cruel in the case of that adventurous traveller, attractive Pennsylvania novelist, entertaining lecturer, well-equipped critic, wholesome wit, industrious journalist, and manly man, who ever loved poetry most of all, and who, save Holmes, was at once the most natural and the most accomplished American master of the purely lyrical art since Poe. The melodies of the

Bayard Taylor, 1825–1878.

† An Invocation," by William Hayes Ward, D.D.

infinite song rang in his ear, and he almost caught and reproduced in verse some high strains of the universe of matter and of man. But

> "Now I hear it not:—I loiter
> Gayly as before;
> Yet I sometimes think,—and thinking
> Makes my heart so sore,—
> Just a few steps more,
> And there might have shone for me,
> Blue and infinite, the sea."

From his quiet and opulent Chester County in Pennsylvania to Europe in the east, to California in the west, to frozen Iceland in the far north, and to torrid ancient Egypt in the sun-drenched continent of the south, Taylor travelled with the poet's wander-staff; and from nearly every field he brought back some ballad or other lyric, some dramatic sketch or Parnassian thought. A few of these he modestly called "Rhymes of Travel"—it was at least well to show that America had at length become rich enough to call true poems "rhymes," having begun by declaring rhymes to be poems. The classical influence and spirit, also, were not wanting in a singer, who, like Keats, had lacked the mellowing influences of collegiate life. And what other English-speaking poet has so reproduced the very atmosphere of the Orient as did this writer of the lovely "Bedouin Song," this "Western Asiatic," as his friend and loyal critic Stedman aptly calls him? The Yankee Unitarian Emerson, from Massachusetts, and the Quaker Taylor from Pennsylvania,

stretched forth their hands to the realms of "The Lord's Lay" and "The Arabian Nights." But Taylor was not the less American; he wrote "Poems of Home and Travel," and "The Quaker Widow" is purely of his own soil and time. Nearer still to his own heart and experiences are parts of "The Poet's Journal"—which, in its externals, proffers hexameters almost as good as Longfellow's.

I would call Taylor's last years a period of poetic decline, were it not for its two brilliant successes. When I think of "The Picture of St. John," "Lars; a Pastoral of Norway," "The Prophet; a Tragedy," "Home Pastorals, Ballads, and Lyrics," the resonant but imperfectly successful Ode for the national centennial in 1876, and "Prince Deukalion; a Lyrical Drama," there comes to mind the memory of scattered successes and an irregular conglomerate failure. Seldom does achievement lag so far behind desire as in the case of the "Deukalion." Taylor sought to make it a poem fitly chronicling the entire upward and onward march of man, but overwork and failing powers are sadly manifest.

Yet, after all, neither vain excuse nor word of deep disappointment need embitter our memories of one who produced (albeit in three years) a metrical version of Faust that for practical purposes is faultless, and who wrote (in four days) "The Masque of the Gods," our best addition to the loftiest or religious division of the drama, the highest form of literature.

To George H. Boker, Taylor's friend, editor, and fellow-Pennsylvanian, also belongs one of the infrequent American successes in the department of the drama. As Taylor attained, in "The Masque of the Gods," a serene height of religious expression which Longfellow usually missed in his similar efforts, so Boker, with much of Longfellow's bookishness, added to some of his dramas a playwright's skill. When I read Boker's "Francesca da Rimini" and "Calaynos," in my college days, their *atmosphere* impressed me quite as strongly as their words and deeds; the student of Italian life, yet most influenced by the mighty plays of the period of Shakespeare and his fellows, brought to his page the far unworldly charm which belongs to letters and the library lamp. But in later years an eminent American actor found in the first named of these plays the acting-quality as well as the closet-beauty. In the desert of the American drama the work of Boker, then, is doubly welcome. It is not "indigenous" or new or indispensable; it merely offers somewhat of the strength of word, the flame of color, the intensity of act, of the earlier or later English makers of plays, to whom the bloody pages of mediæval history have been so rich an inspiration. That verbal grace which must be added to sincere sentiment, if a good lyric is to be made, is a mark of some of Boker's songs, such as the "Dragoon's Song," the "Lancer's Song," or the "Dirge for a Sailor," beginning:

George Henry Boker, b. 1823.

Slow, slow! toll it low,
As the sea-waves break and flow,
With the same dull, slumberous motion
As his ancient mother, Ocean,
Rocked him on through storm and calm,
From the iceberg to the palm:
So his drowsy ears may deem
That the sound which wakes his dream
Is the ever-moaning tide,
Washing on his vessel's side.

Others of his lyrics are hurried and imperfect, with weak words and forced rhymes. But as we look back upon the past half-century of American verse his dramatic work, though not of the greatest, stands out the more clearly. We have produced dozens of song-makers, but seldom a dramatic author, and only two writers of acting plays which are also pieces of literature: Payne ("Brutus") and Boker.

The third singer in the trio of poets which included Taylor and Boker was R. H. Stoddard; the three were united in bonds of personal friendship and literary enthusiasm as firm as those which for a lifetime joined Lowell the poet, William Page the painter, and Charles F. Briggs the *littérateur*. Boker's literary life has always been connected with Philadelphia—once our greatest city and literary as well as political capital, but more distinguished of late for culture than creation. Stoddard, Massachusetts-born, has long been a leading member of that "New York group" which once, notwithstanding the renown of Irving, Bryant, and Poe,

Richard Henry Stoddard, b. 1825.

was less conspicuous than the Boston and Cambridge and Concord coteries, but which, in these latter days, is drawing to itself a large part of the genius of the land. New York is old enough, and widely-rich enough, to proffer many of the advantages and distractions of a book and periodical centre like London or Paris; and Stoddard, therein, has been a man of letters from the first. His extensive acquaintance with English verse, equalled only by Stedman's, and his artistic taste and fearlessness of speech, have been long devoted to that anonymous literary criticism which he has contributed to the omnivorous and short-memoried periodical press, and to his acknowledged editorial work upon anthologies, collections of prose essays or *ana*, and editions of standard authors. But his heart of hearts and song of songs are the poet's; to his Arcady, Arabia, and Ind no breath of custom-house, city library, or newspaper office has ever com· I do not mean to say that he has not been tempted at times, by the calls that so frequently beset the metropolitan man-of-letters, to swift improvisations, extravaganzas, or medleys in verse, designed to fit a temporary wish or demand. The gap between his best and worst is sadly wide. But his five hundred pages of collected poems are full-freighted with the *opima spolia* of observation, reflection, fancy, imagination. Let him who fears that American materialism can silence the chant of the soul and the carol of nature turn to Stoddard and find sufficient answer in him alone. Though

"We have two lives about us,
Two worlds in which we dwell,
Within us, and without us,
Alternate Heaven and Hell,
Without the sombre Real,
Within our heart of hearts the beautiful Ideal,"

yet the poet's

"Castle stands alone,
In some delicious clime,
Away from Earth and Time,
In Fancy's tropic zone,
Beneath its summer skies,
Where all the life-long year the Summer never dies."

I remember, as of yesterday, the fresh open-air delight, the seeming presence of bird, breeze, and flower, with which in boyhood I read Stoddard's "Songs of Summer"; and as I return to them I find indeed that their season "never dies," for it is the eternal summer of song. In the proem to the collected edition the poet tells us that

"These songs of mine, the best that I have sung,
Are not my best, for caged within the lines
Are thousands better (if they would but sing!)."

So it is in all literature, for so it is in a life the whole secret of which is long development from the imperfect and the confined. There is a place for poets below—far below—Sophocles, Horace, Dante, Shakespeare; for we know not when the sphere-song or the nature-word will come from such lyrics as these. Whether they live in litera-

ture is unimportant, for every message of the ideal is welcome to some one, in whose true life it can never be lost. Stoddard is to be recognized in the muses' court not only because he is one of the few Americans who can write blank verse (it is natural that he hails Bryant as our chief bard); not because the mysteries of the sonnet and the ode are open to him, but chiefly for the spontaneous and imaginative music which is *ubique gentium* the best credential of the poet, whether he write epics or the shortest Elizabethan madrigal or Scotch love-song. I cannot follow Stoddard in his evident preference for his songs on Asian themes; nor can I praise the too numerous pessimistic and aging strains betokening overmuch a sense of life's weariness and uncertain skies. Let his best and brightest self sing down in a lyric, or weigh down with some strong line from sonnet or ode, such anacreontic memories, such cis-Atlantic echoes or sympathetic answers of Heine,—whose influence in the world I am almost ready to declare mischievous. The *credo* of this poet and of all poets is found in the best work Stoddard has yet produced, his "Hymn to the Beautiful." It is conspicuously influenced by Wordsworth's great ode; it reminds us now of Shelley, now of Keats; its two first divisions are weak; nor, of course, is it novel in its deep fundamental devout idea, underlying many poems and uttered in many words all adown the line of the centuries. The idea is the very soul of art: the thing of beauty that is a joy

The Soul of Poetry: "Hymn to the Beautiful."

forever; the truth that is beauty and the beauty that is truth; the beauty that is its own excuse for being. Never can singer attempt to phrase a deeper thought than this:*

My heart is full of tenderness and tears,
And tears are in my eyes, I know not why,
With all my grief content to live for years,
Or even this hour to die.
My youth is gone, but that I heed not now,
My love is dead, or worse than dead can be,
My friends drop off, like blossoms from a bough,
But nothing troubles me,—
Only the golden flush of sunset lies
Within my heart like fire, like dew within my eyes.

Spirit of Beauty! whatsoe'er thou art,
I see thy skirt afar, and feel thy power;
It is thy presence fills this charmèd hour,
And fills my charmèd heart:
Nor mine alone, but myriads feel thee now,
That know not what they feel, nor why they bow.
Thou canst not be forgot,
For all men worship thee, and know it not;
Nor men alone, but babes with wondrous eyes,
New-comers from the skies.
We hold the keys of Heaven within our hands,
The heirloom of a higher, happier state,
And lie in infancy at Heaven's gate,
Transfigured in the light that streams along the lands.
Around our pillows golden ladders rise,
And up and down the skies,
With wingèd sandals shod,

* With the exception of one obvious misprint, I have followed, as in duty bound, the author's revised text of 1880, though not deeming it in all respects an improvement upon that given in the 1852 volume of "Poems."

The angels come and go, the Messengers of God!
Nor, though they fade from us, do they depart—
It is the childly heart:
We walk as heretofore,
Adown their shining ranks, but see them nevermore.
Heaven is not gone, but we are blind with tears,
Groping our way along the downward slope of years!

From earliest infancy my heart was thine,
With childish feet I trod thy temple aisles,
Not knowing tears, I worshipped thee with smiles,
Or if I wept it was with joy divine.
By day, and night, on land, and sea, and air,
I saw thee everywhere.
A voice of greeting from the wind was sent,
The mists enfolded me with soft white arms,
The birds did sing to lap me in content,
The rivers wove their charms,
And every little daisy in the grass
Did look up in my face, and smile to see me pass.
Not long can Nature satisfy the mind,
Nor outward fancies feed its inner flame;
We feel a growing want we cannot name,
And long for something sweet, but undefined.
The wants of Beauty other wants create,
Which overflow on others, soon or late;
For all that worship thee must ease the heart,
By Love, or Song, or Art.
Divinest Melancholy walks with thee,
And Music with her sister Poesy;
But on thy breast Love lies, immortal child,
Begot of thine own longings, deep and wild;
The more we worship him the more we grow
Into thy perfect image here below;
For here below, as in the spheres above,
All Love is Beauty, and all Beauty—Love!
Not from the things around us do we draw
The love within, within the love is born,
Remembered light of some forgotten morn,

Recovered canons of eternal law.
The painter's picture, the rapt poet's song,
The sculptor's statue, never saw the Day—
Were never in colors, sounds, or shapes of clay,
Whose crowning work still does its spirit wrong.
Hue after hue divinest pictures grow,
Line after line immortal songs arise,
And limb by limb, out-starting stern and slow,
The statue wakes with wonder in its eyes:
And in the Master's mind
Sound after sound is born, and dies like wind,
That echoes through a range of ocean caves,
And straight is gone to weave its spell upon the waves
The mystery is thine,
For thine the more mysterious human heart,
The Temple of all wisdom, Beauty's shrine,
The Oracle of Art!

Earth is thine outer court, and Life a breath.
Why should we fear to die, and leave the Earth?
Not thine alone the lesser key of Birth,
But all the keys of Death.
And all the worlds, with all that they contain
Of Life, and Death, and Time, are thine alone;
The Universe is girdled with a chain,
And hung below the Throne
Where Thou dost sit, the Universe to bless,
Thou sovereign Smile of God, Eternal Loveliness!

On this ever-recurrent theme none is more worthy to speak than a poet who has surveyed the entire field of contemporary English and American verse, noting wherein it has followed or spurned the eternal canons. Stedman's related volumes, "Victorian Poets" and "Poets of America," are from the pen of a man who has elsewhere told us that "crit-

Edmund Clarence Stedman, b. 1833.

icism is the art and practice of declaring in what degree any word, character, or action conforms to the Right;" and that "the consensus of the fine arts . . . . is such that, while each has inexorable limits, they all move in harmony, and subject to the same enduring principles." The value of these critical surveys depends even more upon their author's perception and delicately-clear but never impertinent statement of this broad principle than upon his extended and indefatigable studies and his felicity of expression.* He understands the harmony of the arts—all of them, whether spoken or written language, dramatic action, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, mere means of intellectual and spiritual presentation from mind to mind—and in himself refutes all idea of the essential severance of the critical function from the creative, because he makes criticism creation. Naturally we find his poetry to be that of one who sings because he must, yet with devotion to the austere principles of an art that held Shakespeare and Dante in bonds that none were less desirous than they to spurn. Art without soul is worthless; soul without form is

* The student of American poetry must turn with constant obligation to the critical aid furnished by Mr. Stedman's volume thereon—the first adequate study of an important division of verse. In that volume one recognizes Mr. Stedman's breadth and depth of catholic learning, as well as the illuminating power of discriminating utterance possessed by a poet who constantly shows how nearly related are the criticism of art and the creation of art. To him all friends of American letters must constantly remain in debt;—nor would I attempt to lead my readers through the same paths were it not made necessary by the general plan of my history, undertaken years before the publication of "Poets of America," and based, of course, upon ideas often different from those of my predecessor.

voiceless; Stedman's poetry—described unconsciously in his own words concerning another—is that of

> the brave soul
> Which, touched with fire, dwells not on whatsoever
> Its outer senses hold in their intent,
> But, sleepless even in sleep, must gather toll
> Of dreams which pass like barks upon the river
> And make each vision Beauty's instrument;
> That from its own love Love's delight can tell,
> And from its own grief guess the shrouded Sorrow:
> From its own joyousness of Joy can sing;
> That can predict so well
> From its own dawn the lustre of to-morrow,
> The whole flight from the flutter of the wing.*

This is the soul not only of the life-romancer but of every true lyrist and idyllist. The choice (and now very rare) London collection of Stedman's best poems written prior to 1879 is fitly entitled "Lyrics and Idyls, with other Poems." Their author is pre-eminently a lyrist (as he early indicated in his "Poems, Lyric and Idyllic"), not many notes of whose Pan-song have been lost in his banker-life in the metropolis, for the great pavemented city, with its overshadowing masses of brick and stone, has never been able to banish the idyllic from his thought and verse. The ready pen of the journalist suggested, in his young manhood, that brilliant but forgotten social satire "The Diamond Wedding," and perhaps the more enduring ante-war ballad, "How Old Brown took Harper's Ferry." But

A lyrist and idyllist.

* Stedman's "Hawthorne and other Poems," pp. 15, 16.

"Alice of Monmouth," published in the dark year 1864, was rightly called in its sub-title, "An *Idyl* of the Great War." Its battle pictures have a vividness that Whitman's verse or prose is powerless to rival:

> Friends and foes,—who could discover which,
> As they marked the zigzag, outer ditch,
> Or lay so cold and still in the bush,
> Fallen and trampled down in the last wild rush?
> Then the shattered forest-trees; the clearing there
> Where a battery stood; dead horses, pawing the air
> With horrible upright hoofs; a mangled mass
> Of wounded and stifled men in the low morass,
> And the long trench dug in haste for a burial-pit
> Whose yawning length and breadth all comers fit.
>
> And over the dreadful precinct, like the lights
> That flit through graveyard walks in dismal nights,
> Men with lanterns were groping among the dead,
> Holding the flame to every hueless face,
> And bearing those whose life had not wholly fled
> On stretchers, that looked like biers, from the ghastly place.

But in other pages it tells us how

> Softly the rivulet's ripples flow;
> Dark is the grove that lover's know;
> Here, where the whitest blossoms blow
> The reddest and ripest berries grow;

or bids us look upward to a diffused sky-glory that is a celestial omen of ultimate brotherhood:

> Immeasurable, white, a spotless fire, . . .
> Gleams of the heavenly city walled with gold!

The poet's view of life is all-inclusive; city and country, war and peace, present and future, time and eternity, are equal for the seer who sings of flower or star, life or death, brook or battle-field, and would interpret the secret of the whole. There is no violent or unintentional contrast between the parts of this remarkable and rememberable poem, the metrical wealth of which is alone enough to attract attention to its story and its pictures. And the daintiness of the little lyric called "Toujours Amour"; the rustic spirit of "The Doorstep"; the grim strength of "The Lord's Day Gale" (both of which Whittier might have written); the hearthstone affection of the lines to "Laura, my Darling," are inconsistent neither with the sweet mediæval allegorism of "The Blameless Prince" nor with the distinctive Americanism and vitality of the swiftly-moving John Brown narrative. The singer properly refuses to abstract himself, like Poe, from half of life; nor can we wish it in days when even a Tennyson must perforce turn from Surrey or the Isle of Wight toward the Crimea, or venture the solution of the innermost problems of British society.

Life and the Poet.

The philosophy of Mr. Stedman's poetic product, if the term may be applied without hiding the preëminent singing quality of that product, and if I understand his aim, seems to lie in his broad view of the relations of nature and man in time, and of the necessarily catholic function of the poet. He who

The Old Thought in New Times.

has noted the inner purposes and the superficial fashions of the Victorian bards, and has shown how the great religious, political, and social movements from 1840 to 1865 affected the American choir, would be unlikely to write verse uninfluenced by the same conditions, and by their serious observation on his own part. The student and translator of Theocritus, the lover of the Elizabethan madrigals, and the editor of that modern Greek, Landor, he perceives that the poet may enrich his thought with the spoils of thirty centuries, and be the more, rather than the less, fitted to write a Yankee love-lyric or a battle-song of to-day. There can be no question that our contemporary poets are readers as well as singers; Wordsworth's private library, with its three hundred volumes, would have starved Lowell or Stedman. "Ofte thenkyng," says the Wycliffe version of Ecclesiastes, "is turment of fleisch"; and certainly it is a torment to the spontaneity which should be a mark of the minstrel. But he who reads in order to sing aright and betimes, may, like Stedman, find his theme in the daily paper, nor sacrifice one whit of constant devotion to the serenely spiritual:

> Above the clouds I lift my wing
> To hear the bells of Heaven ring;
> Some of their music, though my flights be wild,
> To earth I bring;
> Then let me soar and sing!*

* "The Singer," in "Early Poems."

How often do the poets, in the freshness of their youth, utter this word of life-long allegiance! Nor can it be renounced in middle-life or age by the company of those who, in perennial youth, are ever "children of the morrow"—and of the mountain-top. The poet's mind is to him a higher kingdom than that of the "middle-earth" of the Anglo-Saxons; for though he lives among men he leads them because of his loftier outlook. To him, in allegory as well as in fact, as to Stedman in that one of his "Poems of Nature" entitled "The Mountain"

> The proud city seems a mole
> To this horizon-bounded whole;
> And, from my station on the mount,
> The whole is little worth account
> Beneath the overhanging sky,
> That seems so far and yet so nigh.
> Here breathe I inspiration rare,
> Unburdened by the grosser air
> That hugs the lower land, and feel
> Through all my finer senses steal
> The life of what that life may be,
> Freed from this dull earth's density,
> When we with many a soul-felt thrill,
> Shall thrid the ether at our will,
> Through widening corridors of morn
> And starry archways swiftly borne.

This central thought of poetry may easily be pushed to affectation or absurdity; and in its too eager search we may profess to discover "inner meanings" which the song was never intended to bear; but its comprehension is the key of lyric or

idyl, sonnet or epic. This to know is also the utter removal of that foolish provincialism or *quidnunc* superficial curiosity which declares that *American* poetry, if it would exist at all, must be limited to pictures of the wharf, the prairie, and the gulch; to city directories and geographical indexes; to axe-swinging pioneers and moral murderers.

The literary career of Mr. Stedman, then, is in all its course a sufficiently instructive illustration of the dominance of the "gay science" over wordly weal, and yet of the constant friendliness and companionship of the two. The service of art, like that of religion, is perfect freedom, whatever the imprisoning environment. I suppose no more strenuous or forbidding circumstances can be imagined for a poet than the duties of a war-correspondent in the field, or the stress of a banker's daily life. When I add that Mr. Stedman turned aside, in mature years, to make a long prose survey of the multiform poetic product of his time, the dissipation or distraction that has beset him would seem to be complete. Not so; the field of battle, as we have seen, subserved the artistic good of "Alice of Monmouth"; in Wall Street he found the wandering Pan; and from criticism he returned to song with new strength and seriousness of devotion. The poet's life is dual, but however long the soul and the body strive in earth or air, the soul must win. Stedman has kept clear of the increasing sense of sadness that has fallen, mistlike, over so much of

the later verse of his fellow-worker, Stoddard. As one re-reads his books in course, a steady progress is marked. After the war-fire of "Alice of Monmouth" came the serene idyllic romance of "The Blameless Prince," as from the land of Morris and Rossetti, but of wholesomer tone; while such metrical experiments as "Surf" or the Greek translations, and such stray dramatic studies as "Anonyma," prepared the way for the strength and inspiring suggestiveness of the "Dartmouth Ode," or the fit commemoration of Hawthorne read at Harvard in 1877. Stedman has been tempted overmuch, like most American singers, by current themes of humor or pathos, dedication or commemoration; but even his occasional verse has risen to the merit of the two productions just mentioned; the lyric on "Liberty Enlightening the World"; the terse lines "On the Death of an Invincible Soldier" (Grant); or the scholarly ode "Corda Concordia," read at the opening, in 1881, of the Concord Summer School of Philosophy. None but a mature strength could have written the poem on "The Hand of Lincoln," "A Vigil," "The World Well Lost," or the quaintly archaic "Star Bearer." But whether one read the simpler lyrics of his youth, the two long poems, the exquisite song beginning

> I know not if moonlight or starlight
> Be soft on the land and the sea,—
> I catch but the near light, the far light
> Of eyes that are burning for me,

or the statelier and serener productions of later years, he quickly recognizes the poet; and notes, as he turns the pages of the successive volumes, the onward and upward steps of a true minstrel-journey. If he feels the lack of a large, consolidated product, or at least of an adequately representative product, he thinks of the troubled times and manifold duties of the poet's first-half of life, and remembers that the richer years are still before him.

Thomas Bailey Aldrich, b. 1836.

The poetry of Thomas Bailey Aldrich may be described, with substantial fairness, in the terse words wherein Emerson characterizes Herrick: he "is the lyric poet, ostentatiously choosing petty subjects, petty names for each piece, and disposing of his theme in a few lines, or in a couplet; is never dull, and is the master of miniature painting." Aldrich's limitations and failures have been recognized first of all by himself; he has anticipated his critics in that rigid judgment of his own works which is so indignantly repelled by the majority of singers. His literary pathway is strewn with abandoned books and poems: the pretty juvenile story, "Daisy's Necklace, and What Came of It"; the romance, "Out of his Head"; many a lyric; and an occasional blank-verse narrative like "Garnaut Hall," which seems to me well worth saving. Through his early verse stole pleasant echoes of Keats or Tennyson; in later days he has sometimes essayed, as in "Miantowona," to treat an Indian legend in an unfamiliar metre, whereby an

injurious comparison with Longfellow has immediately occurred to the reader's mind; and his dramatic pictures have been studies rather than creations. "Friar Jerome's Beautiful Book" proves his success in narrative verse, attested once more in "Judith," to whom an Anglo-Saxon singer thus returned a thousand years after the first of our poems on that attractive but difficult theme. Large creative force, however, is not the quality upon which Aldrich relies; whatsoever belongs to the sweet or dainty or epigrammatic lyric of art or impression is his. From his experiments in subject and treatment he returns to his chosen field of early youth with renewed confidence and more assured success. The singer and his readers would laugh, perhaps, if I were seriously to place him on a level with Herrick; and yet the aspiration of the closing lines of his address to that master has sometimes been fulfilled in Aldrich's work:

An American Herrick.

> If thy soul, Herrick, dwelt with me,
> This is what my songs would be:
> Hints of our sea-breezes, blent
> With odors from the Orient;
> Indian vessels deep with spice,
> Star-showers from the Norland ice;
> Wine-red jewels that seem to hold
> Fire, but only burn with cold;
> Antique goblets, strangely wrought,
> Filled with the wine of happy thought;
>
> Bridal measures, vain regrets,
> Laburnum buds and violets;

Hopeful as the break of day;
Clear as crystal; new as May;
Musical as brooks that run
O'er yellow shadows in the sun;
Soft as the satin fringe that shades
The eyelids of thy fragrant maids;
Brief as thy lyrics, Herrick, are,
And polished as the bosom of a star.

Passing by those Eastern themes and scenes which have never lost their charm for him—"Dressing the Bride," "When the Sultan goes to Ispahan," "The Sultana," etc.—one finds many a song of delicate quality, assuring to Aldrich, in the history of American poetry, a place of his own,—not that of a masterly bard, not that of a successor of the dead leaders of American song, but that of a maker of lines—or "Intaglios," as he calls them in one division—which we may call "painted trifles and fantastic toys," without any intimation that they are not worthy of due praise. One hardly need turn to the book for songs that sing themselves in the brain: "Before the Rain," "After the Rain," "Tiger-Lilies," "May," "Nameless Pain," "The Lunch," "At Two and Twenty," "Amontillado," "The One White Rose," "The Voice of the Sea," which, whether grave or gay, have something of the charm Aldrich himself describes, as of

Remembrable Poems.

"Four-line epics one might hide
In the hearts of roses."

In my boyhood I used to go about repeating to myself the more ghostly or ghastly verses, such

as "Glamourie," "December," "Haunted," "The Tragedy," and "Seadrift;" nor am I quite willing, even now, to give up poems which had the singing tone, though not the finished art, of "Palabras Cariñosas" or "A Snowflake."

Aldrich has not scorned the obvious and universal in sentiment, as is shown by his widely known "Baby Bell," the Beranger-like "The Flight of the Goddess," "The Bluebells of New England," or the well-turned sonnets "Fredericksburg" or "Pursuit and Possession." The maturer years, however, have enabled him to strike from a reflective mind, with his fullest art, those brief poems of thoughtful conceit which have brought him his best fame and his highest claim to original creation: "An Untimely Thought," "Destiny," "Rencontre," and "Identity," alike admirable in execution and well deserving the attention they have drawn from many readers and an occasional masterful artist. I cannot however, assign to a place beside "An Untimely Thought" or "Destiny" the famous eight lines entitled "Identity" —best known of all Aldrich's poems. Its cleverness of phrase conceals the essential falsity of its underlying thought. If shuddering shapes that have forth-fared have no identity, then, indeed, they are dead when they are dead.

Walt Whitman, b. 1819.

American literature hardly affords a more striking contrast than that between Aldrich and the last poet to be chronicled in this chapter. Walt Whitman has strength without artistic power or desire, and therefore would

remand metre, rhyme, and form in general to the bygone days of a hollow and artificial literature and a superficial and conventional life.

In absolute ability he is about equal to Taylor, Stoddard, Stedman, or Aldrich; but by minimizing the spiritual and the artistic, and magnifying the physical and the crudely spontaneous, he has attracted an attention among critics in America, England, and the Continental nations greater, for the moment, than that bestowed upon any contemporary singer of his nation, and fairly rivalling the international adulation of his exact opposite, Poe. To him the ideal is little and the immediately actual is much; love is merely a taurine or passerine passion; and to-day is a thing more important than all the past. His courage is unquestionable; his vigor is abounding; and therefore, by the very paradox of his extravagant demands, he has impressed some and interested more, and has induced a limited but affectionate and exceedingly vociferous coterie to attempt, for his sake, to revise the entire canon of the world's art. Many famous authors have bestowed upon him high praise—sometimes revoked or ignored in the calmer years of advancing life; and though unread by the masses whose spokesman and prophet he claims to be, and without special influence or increasing potency, he has been for a generation one of the most conspicuous of his country's authors.

Whitman's prose need not detain us long. In youth he wrote for *The Democratic Review* and

other periodicals brief stories (courageously re-printed in his complete prose-volume, "Specimen Days and Collect"), which, in theme and treatment, are about equal to the forgotten minor fiction of the sentimental time in which they appeared. Their chief characteristics are obvious morality of the Sunday-school-book order, and a sensationalism which lacked an effective literary form. The domestic virtues, the evils of intemperance, the far-reaching consequences of "One Wicked Impulse," etc., were portrayed in language which assuredly harmed none and doubtless benefited some. "The Child and the Profligate," "Wild Frank's Return," "Lingrave's Temptation," "Little Jane," "Dumb Kate," etc., occupy that pleasant borderland of literature which is secure from the intrusion of either praise or blame. The remainder of the volume is filled with random jottings concerning the author's life in army hospitals during the war; his experiences and sensations in city or country; his reflections on literature and life; his reminiscences of Lincoln and other celebrities; his impressions of American travel; his broadly optimistic views of democracy (chiefly expressed in a long essay entitled "Democratic Vistas"); and various prefaces to successive editions of his poems. The prose, whatever its theme, is that of an honest, hearty, healthful man, fond of the ruddier and commoner elements in humanity, impressed by natural scenery and out-door life, ardently attached to his country and his time, and

Whitman's prose.

sincerely believing in that country's future. The pleasant quality of these miscellaneous pages is their outspoken freshness; but their prose style is a model of inelegance and unattractiveness, from the pen of one who never learned to write well, and who fell, in an untutored state, into a lifelong enslavement to the more obvious mannerisms of Carlyle. "Specimen Days and Collect," in brief, has no value save as a commentary upon its author's poetry, and even here its importance is small, for poetry that is not self-interpretative is the possession not of literature but of the estimable company of "conjectural readers" and discoverers of "inner meanings." Whitman would be the last to claim that "Leaves of Grass," his life-work, does not explain its reason for being.

The plan of "Leaves of Grass," patiently, courageously and consistently elaborated piece by piece during the author's whole lifetime (and set forth not only in the poems themselves but in needlessly numerous and verbose prefaces and prose articles by the author, as well as in his spoken words), is to present a complete picture of typical humanity in the author's time and land, especially in its pioneer constructiveness, material achievements, and hearty comradeship, omitting no animal element of the whole personality which we call man or woman, but celebrating and glorifying all. In this picture, physical passion plays a large part, but in the claim of the author and his friends, not a disproportionate one; other equally important physio-

"Leaves of Grass."

logical functions, such as digestion and the circulation of the blood, are ignored. The sexuality of Whitman's poems forms their most obvious characteristic, attracting the notice of the evil-minded, disgusting the majority of readers, and ardently defended by the members of the Whitman cult, including men and women of whose moral integrity and intellectual capacity there can be no question. As regards this matter, it is perfectly true that passages as objectionable as those in "Leaves of Grass" may be culled from the best Hebrew, Arabian, Greek, Latin, Italian, French and English literature; that "to the pure all things are pure;" and that the nineteenth century is the first, in the history of the world's society, to insist upon the omission of mention of the coarser elements in physical passion. Furthermore, Whitman is not the worst author in the world, even in an increasingly fastidious era. There are some poets, who, without specially indecent illusion, throw around and from their books a mephitic atmosphere more deadening than Whitman's frank and unblushing animalism. The fact remains, however, that the generative faculty, like the sudorific glands elsewhere gloated over by the same author, is not *per se* a poetic theme, and that Whitman's treatment of it is destitute of the artistic form which alone makes literature of the corresponding parts of the "Arabian Nights" or the "Decameron."

There remains another and all-inclusive criticism, affecting the entire plan and ultimate suc-

cess of "Leaves of Grass," and removing all chance of its association with those great books of the world with which Whitman's admirers have unhesitatingly classed it. This criticism is found in the candid admission from Whitman himself, that he had planned to sing of man both spiritual and human, but was able to carry out no more than the lesser half of the grand thought. This passage, by far the most important in all Whitman's prose, has been strangely overlooked by critics; while his extravagant eulogists naturally dislike to give it publicity. With a frankness which some of his disciples might well imitate, Whitman here states very explicitly his conception of a complete man and a complete poem of man:

I am not sure but the last inclosing sublimation of race or poem is, what it thinks of death after the rest has been comprehended and said, even the grandest—after those contributions to mightiest nationality, or to sweetest song, or to the best personalism, male or female, have been gleaned from the rich and varied themes of tangible life, and have been fully accepted and sung, and the pervading fact of visible existence, with the duty it devolves, is rounded and apparently completed. It still remains to be really completed by suffusing through the whole and several, that other pervading invisible fact, so large a part (is it not the largest part?) of life here, combining the rest, and furnishing, for person or State, the only permanent and unitary meaning to all, even the meanest life, consistently with the dignity of the universe, in Time. As from the eligibility to this thought, and the cheerful conquest of this fact, flash forth the first distinctive proofs of the soul, so to me (extending it only a little further,) the ultimate Democratic purports, the ethereal and spiritual ones, are to concentrate

here, and as fixed stars, radiate hence. For, in my opinion, it is no less than this idea of immortality, above all other ideas, that is to enter into, and vivify, and give crowning religious stamp, to democracy in the New World.

It was originally my intention, after chanting in "Leaves of Grass" the songs of the body and existence, to then compose a further, equally needed volume, based on those convictions of perpetuity and conservation which, enveloping all precedents, make the unseen soul govern absolutely at last. I meant, while in a sort continuing the theme of my first chants, to shift the slides, and exhibit the problem and paradox of the same ardent and fully appointed personality entering the sphere of the resistless gravitation of spiritual law, and with cheerful face estimating death, not at all as the cessation, but as somehow what I feel it must be, the entrance upon by far the greatest part of existence, and something that life is at least as much for, as it is for itself. But the full construction of such a work is beyond my powers, and must remain for some bard in the future. The physical and the sensuous, in themselves or in their immediate continuations, retain holds upon me which I think are never entirely releas'd; and those holds I have not only denied, but hardly wish'd to weaken.

Meanwhile, not entirely to give the go-by to my original plan, and far more to avoid a mark'd hiatus in it, than to entirely fulfil it, I end my books with thoughts, or radiations from thoughts, on death, immortality, and a free entrance into the spiritual world. In those thoughts, in a sort, I make the first steps or studies toward the mighty theme, from the point of view necessitated by my foregoing poems, and by modern science. In them I also seek to set the key-stone to my democracy's enduring arch. I recollate them now, for the press, in order to partially occupy and offset days of strange sickness, and the heaviest affliction and bereavement of my life; and I fondly please myself with the notion of leaving that cluster to you, O unknown reader of the future, as "something to remember me by," more especially than all else.*

* Preface, 1876, to the two volume Centennial Edition of "Leaves of Grass" and "Two Rivulets,"—reprinted in "Specimen Days and Collect," 281, note.

Nothing could be more definite (in spite of the prose style, involved as usual) than this utterance concerning the written poem and the unwritten one; it is a credit to the author's mind and soul. But as far as "Leaves of Grass" is concerned, we are limited to that which it is, and must judge its success by the criterion set up by Whitman himself. The feet and legs of clay cannot be made, by mere blindness or vociferation, to take the place of an entire marble statue.

As a poem of the individual, therefore, "Leaves of Grass" is essentially imperfect. There are three parts in creative success: the aim, the means, and the result; here the aim itself, so far as the printed poem is concerned, is admittedly inadequate. That which we call man or woman includes more than body; more than external achievement; more, even, than loyal comradeship and affectionate association. The vicissitudes of life, death, suffering, struggle, aspiration, occasional triumph, all point us toward an eternal development of spirit. If our continued life be a fact, most that Whitman "celebrates" is temporary and unimportant; while that which he confesses himself unable to treat—the ideal, the ultimately beautiful, the on-faring and forth-faring soul—is the very life of our life. Not so Job, Isaiah, Joel, Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare. Enough of these comparisons, so dear to Whitman's admirers! not so Longfellow, Whittier, Emerson, Poe. It has been claimed that there is a great triple underlying thought in "Leaves of

Its limitations.

Grass" from beginning to end: the thought of unity, beauty, and progression. If this were so it would be a great poem, at least in aim. But the unity is that of indifferent conglomeration, the beauty is imperfect or unethereal, and the progression is unduly physical and material.

Turning to the second element in Whitman's verse, its form, we find the unrhymed and unmetrical, but not unstudied or unmusical, chant familiar in the authorized English translation of the poetical passages of the Bible, in the so-called poems of Ossian, in Tupper, and in some few other writers. Whitman's choice of this potentially noble form was wise; it is, though no novelty, comparatively unfamiliar; it naturally fits his bold and outspoken reflections or descriptions, avoids nearly all the vexatious fetters of verse, and gives a free mind a free medium of utterance. Printed as prose (save in its tedious and oft-recurring catalogues) it would show obvious merits, easily surpassing the avowed prose of its own author. In its present *quasi* verse-form it is often pleasing and sometimes resonant and stately, though seldom becoming the art-product essential in whatsoever is poetry. We do not demand rhyme in poetry, nor always metre; but rhythmical beauty is essential. In its feebler divisions it may be parodied and equalled; in its best estate it may fairly challenge comparison with the higher work of any American poet of the second grade. Chiefly when Whitman's eye turns in the direction of theism, individual immortality

Its verse-form.

affectionate commemoration of the dead, heartfelt sympathy, loving appreciation of the supernal beauty of nature, does he excel; a fact which shows once more that the misapplication of his powers has stunted and half-hidden his better poetic self. The noblest parts of "Leaves of Grass" are devoted to these themes, and not to blatant egotism or sprawling "Americanism." The poet, after some experimenting in early life, deliberately put his worst foot forward, but he followed the law of negatives so dexterously that he found not the slightest difficulty in arousing and retaining interest, because of his strenuous and oft-repeated assertion of that which was least worth asserting at all. His half-perception of this fact undoubtedly dictates his frequent statement of the experimental and limited character of his pioneer-book, which is occasionally noble, shows many a beautiful thought or line, but is crammed with an undigested miscellany.

In the course of a certain famous American trial, the accused, who was a man of unusual cleverness of speech, said that one of his greatest difficulties was to keep his friends from breaking out into a ruinous defence of him. Whitman (and Emerson) might say the same thing. Both Whitman and Emerson have been wiser than their disciples; the "poet of democracy," whom his adulators compare with Homer, Æschylus, and Shakespeare, not wholly to the advantage of the latter, modestly avers, notwithstanding his dramatic egotism in his poems, that he makes no such

claims, and that his work must wait a hundred years for a just estimate. At the end of a century, I think, it will be apparent that "Leaves of Grass" is not "the revealer and herald" of "a religious era not yet reached;" "the bible of Democracy, containing the highest exemplar of life yet furnished," including "a new spiritual life for myriads of men and women," and "unspeakably important."* Nor is its mission to restore the lost and forgotten spirit of the Golden Rule "to heroic and active influence among men."† Whitman fails strongly to enforce the power of true individuality, not lost in the mass of the population, or in indiscriminate comradeship. His love of neighbor is too ardent, fleshly, immediate, material. He does not peer, like Emerson, far below the bottom of the grave, and high above the cross on the spire-top. The vast relations between God, soul, love, and eternity are but partly visible to this poet of practical progress. The sublimities of the ideal, the everlasting development of the soul, and not merely of man among men, are confused or lost in panoramic pictures of America between 1855 and 1885. His highest thought is not fitly voiced in his verse, which falls short of Whitman, as Whitman falls short of him who sang:

What it is not.

> To read the sense the woods impart
> You must bring the throbbing heart.

* Richard Maurice Bucke, "Walt Whitman," pp. 183, 185, 190.

† Ernest Rhys, introduction to "The Poems of Walt Whitman (selected)," page x; London: 1886.

> Love is aye the counterforce,—
> Terror and Hope and wild Remorse,
> Newest knowledge, fiery thought,
> Or Duty to grand purpose wrought.*

Partial and poor is Whitman's world, thus measured. All that may rightly be claimed for him is found in Emerson, plus an insight into nature, a broader sense of love as ever passing between man's God and God's man, a wider and higher and more spiritual sympathy, a thought more profound, a knowledge intuitively American and studiously classic, an interpenetrative sense of the glory of duty and the serenity of beauty. He who has failed to satisfy his own time that he has portrayed its full life as it knows life, can never be the "poet of the future." Notwithstanding his pioneer spirit and eager outlook, in many respects his face is turned backward toward a far cruder, baser, narrower, past. To limit or to omit the ideal is not to become the leader of times and men yet to be. The ideal is the poet's vision, the soul and body of his song:

> "Thy light alone—like mist o'er mountains driven,
> Or music by the night-wind sent,
> Thro' strings of some still instrument,
> Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
> Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream." †

But though Whitman's poetic and spiritual sense may be so defective as to unfit him to be a

* Emerson, "The Miracle."
† Shelley, "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty."

seer or an artist, much of his work is admirable and enjoyable. I have no sympathy with his worshippers, but no greater fondness for the bigots and prudes who condemn him unread. His theory of his life-poem is defective, but so far as it goes is perfectly legitimate. It has been carried out with strength, and forms one of the best examples of poetic development afforded in modern literature. Its assertions of comradeship (hardly of friendship in the large true sense), pioneer manliness, the essential wholesomeness and nobility of average American character, the self-reliant and self-preserving nature of democracy, the worthlessness of feudalism, the dangers of the merely conventional, the possibilities of the future of "these states," are excellent. Whitman's poems, too, readily proffer lines lovely or lordly, pictures freshly creative and spontaneously welcome. The title of poet is not to be denied to him who wrote "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," "Song of the Broad-Axe," "Pioneers, O Pioneers," "To the Man-of-War Bird," "Come up from the Fields, Father," "The City Dead-House," "Proud Music of the Storm," "Whispers of Heavenly Death," or, best of all, the remarkable commemorative poems "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," and "O Captain, my Captain." Whitman is the fittest of all laureates of Lincoln, whose greatness the years are making plainer; and in his non-personal and non-martial verse he is never to be accounted less than an original and significantly interesting bard.

What it is.

Not to him alone, not to any one man, will fall the task of moulding the future song of America, which will be at once catholic and local, of all time and of its own time. Each of our spring-tide singers is but a herald of summer, and to each may we say:

The future American song.

I sat beneath a fragrant tasselled tree,
Whose trunk encoiling vines had made to be
A glossy fount of leafage. Sweet the air,
Far-off the smoke-veiled city and its care,
Precious and near the book within my hand—
The deathless song of that immortal land
Wherefrom Keats took his young Endymion
And laurelled bards enow their wreaths have won;—
When from some topmost spray began to chant
And flute, and trill, a warbling visitant,
A cat-bird, riotous the world above,
Hasting to spend his heritance ere love
Should music change to madness in his throat,
Leaving him naught but one discordant note.
And as my home-bred chorister outvied
The nightingale, old England's lark beside,
I thought—What need to borrow? Lustier clime
Than ours Earth has not,—nor her scroll a time
Ampler of human glory and desire
To touch the plume, the brush, the lips, with fire;
No sunrise chant on ancient shore and sea,
Since sang the morning stars, more worth shall be
Than ours, once uttered from the very heart
Of the glad race that here shall act its part:
Blithe prodigal, the rhythm free and strong
Of thy brave voice forecasts our poet's song![*]

[*] Stedman, "Music at Home."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BELATED BEGINNING OF FICTION.

FICTION, at its best, forms the highest division of prose literature. The delineation of life, in its complete sense, is its theme; and this delineation, in fiction as in poetry, must include the body, mind, and soul of man, in his journey from the infinite to the infinite. The "light that never was on sea or land," the ideal that glorifies and interprets the real, the unseen that explains to us the fuller meaning of the seen, belong to Cervantes, Le Sage, Goldsmith, Scott, Hawthorne, as truly as to Dante and Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Emerson. The ideal is far more than the visionary and fanciful, more, indeed, than mere imagination in its lower fields. It is truth in its largest sense, a truth so full and round that but part of its revealed glory is visible at once. Toward it the mind springs ever forward with instinctive recognition and undying delight.

Fiction the highest prose.

Between prose-fiction and imaginative poetry the drama (as in any play of Shakespeare) stands as a middle-ground. Shakespeare's view of life includes, at one extreme, heavenly and earthly things undreamt of in narrow philosophy, and at the other Launce and his dog, or Juliet's nurse

So the prose story, in its scheme, may be the ideal romance, bursting the bonds of space and time, or the simplest unadorned tale of actual sayings and doings. Its possibilities are necessarily inferior to those of poetry, not in thought but in form, for verse can display a higher art than prose.

No long argument, therefore, is needed to show the essential wisdom of studying together the poetry and the fiction of a country or a time. Whatever can be separated in a criticism or literary history, these two things are indissoluble. The tales and poems of Poe are one; and scarcely more severable, in our study of the American intellectual product, are Hawthorne and Lowell, Irving and Drake, Mrs. Stowe and Whittier. Comparisons and associations cannot be pushed too far, but it is evident that the creator of "The Last of the Mohicans" and the creator of "Hiawatha" are products of the same soil, with an art more unified than severed, however unlike their capacities and methods.

Unity of poetry and fiction.

In this view of the province of fiction, the earliest achievements of American novelists seem laughable or contemptible. We talk of the ideal and the ineffable, and are obliged to begin with Susanna Rowson and Tabitha Tenney. But English fiction dates back little farther than their day; and it was long indeed before any Anglo-Saxon prose-writers learned to tread in the steps of Boccaccio, Cervantes, and Le Sage. The downfall of the English drama necessarily pre-

ceded the development of the novel, its successor as a means of intellectual amusement. But America, prior to 1750, had no drama, no joy of art, and no creative impulse outside of politics. Even its theology was a slave in chains. New England, in particular, was virtually blind to the infinite vision which makes life worth living, and inspires religion, philosophy, literature, the arts, and science to struggle toward a more perfect expression. Religion, on its external side, was a narrow but intense rectitude, as the essential preparation, in a rigid scheme, for a theologically constructed heaven. Philosophy was an assistant to Calvinistic theology, literature was explicitly didactic, the arts were non-existent, and science was timid "natural philosophy." All this, as I have elsewhere pointed out, was valuable in nation-building, but not immediately beneficial to literature. Outside of New England, similar conditions prevailed, especially in New Jersey; in Pennsylvania thrift, incipient practical philanthropy, and botanical and physical science were not influential in art; and in the southern colonies, indifferent toward doctrinal quiddities, politics was the chief form of creative activity, as theology had long been in Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Art-starvation in America.

One poor little means of expression, nevertheless, was at length vouchsafed in fiction. However limited, timid, bigoted, inartistic, or ignorant a people may be, it is sure to have "feelings." The growing sentimentalism

Old novels of "feeling."

which was to affect even the higher poetry and fiction of Germany and England made its trifling mark upon nascent American literature. In the last decade of the eighteenth century appeared "Charlotte Temple, a Tale of Truth," by Mrs. Rowson—actress, playwright, poet, school-teacher, text-book compiler, and voluminous sentimental novelist. Its pages were long bedewed with many tears of many readers; and, alone among our few eighteenth century tales, it survives to-day, if a cheap pamphlet issue, addressed to a somewhat illiterate public of readers, can be called survival. Its long-drawn melancholy is unrelieved by a touch of art; it is not even amusing in its absurdity. After Mrs. Rowson's burst of tears came Mrs. Tenney's sarcastic laugh; she castigated in her "Female Quixotism, exemplified in the Romantic Opinions and Extravagant Adventures of Dorcasina Sheldon," the lachrymose and gushing willingness of young women to believe in everything superficially romantic. Dorcasina was an American Lydia Languish, and was at least an improvement upon Mrs. Rowson's melancholy heroine—whose misfortunes, unfortunately, were substantially those of a poor girl in real life. The actual, however, did not exert any unwholesomely chastening effect upon Mrs. Rowson's imaginary land of trusting maidens, fiendish deceivers, cypress and rue. These poor old books were issued by the dozen, proudly printed by the presses of a provincial little nation, and

Susanna (Haswell) Rowson, 1761–1824.

Tabitha (Gilman) Tenney, 1762–1837.

marked on their margins with many a pencilled adjective of admiration or horror. The literary chronicle, however, cannot pause to note, even as curiosities, their mottos from "Night Thoughts," their sincere morality, and their occasionally respectable prose or interlarded verse. But there is something pathetic about the faded melodramatic piety of such a typical book as Caroline Matilda Warren's "The Gamesters; or, The Ruins of Innocence" (Boston, 1805), now as dead and forgotten as the little glittering moth that met its own death between two of its heavy leaves.

Charles Brockden Brown, 1771–1810.

American fiction, however, had already made a distinctly significant and important beginning in the works of Charles Brockden Brown, which stand toward our later tales and romances in a relation similar to that held by Freneau's "House of Night" toward later American verse. These old novels:*—"Arthur Mervyn, or, Memories of the Year 1793"; "Wieland, or, The Transformation"; "Edgar Huntly, or, Memories of a Sleep Walker"; "Jane Talbot"; "Ormond, or, The Secret Witness"; "Clara Howard, or, The Enthusiasm of Love"—were our first considerable essays in what was to become a great and growing division of creative literature; and Brown was the earliest man of letters, in the professional sense, in the United States. Their old-fashioned tone is of course apparent at once;

* Fitly republished in 1887 in the standard library edition of Mr. David McKay, of Philadelphia.

repetitions and confusions are not hard to find; in "Edgar Huntly" the author falls into the inartistic error of introducing two somnambulists, and elsewhere he sometimes forgets the personages introduced or the minor details of the plot as previously developed. "Sensibility" and melodramatic horror violently intrude upon the reader's notice instead of being allowed to rise in constructive order; the *deus ex machina* is altogether too visible. In the yellow-fever portrayals to which Brown reverts more than once, and in certain accumulations of murders in other chapters, mere numerical increase is made to take the place of deliberate and orderly art. But whatever the crudeness and irregularity of these books, whatever their prevalent melancholy hue, they have an inherent merit by no means small. Brown had the sense to see, in our period of colonial subserviency, that American scenes and characters (including the North American Indian whom Cooper followed him in portraying) afforded fit themes for the novelist; and in some of his literary effects he anticipated Poe, and even, in a small way, suggested Hawthorne. The call-note of our greatest fiction sounded clear, though faint and far, in Brockden Brown. As one takes from the shelf any of Brown's books—even the preposterous "Clara Howard, or, The Enthusiasm of Love"—he is sure to find, amid a sufficiency of failures, some touch of what we call genius; some passport to a corner, if no more, in the land of imagination.

Portent of Brown's work.

"Not all the wonder that encircles us,
Not all the mysteries that in us lie"

did Brockden Brown's sad eye miss. Edward Dowden, in his life of Shelley, tells us that Brown's novels, with Schiller's "Robbers" and Goethe's "Faust," "were—of all the works with which he was familiar—those which took the deepest root in Shelley's mind, and had the strongest influence in the formation of his character." That high poet looked beyond the timidly conventional and the obviously apparent, and found a thought-kinsman, though of stature less than his, working all alone in the poverty beyond the sea.

The prevalent fashion.

The similarity between Brown's general romantic manner and the prevalent fashion then regnant in English minor fiction is too obvious to need mention. He was a sort of early American Cyril Tourneur, in whom original strength and crude expression were alternately visible in the treatment of weird and deathly themes. The women of his romances are sometimes over-sweetly, and therefore weakly, portrayed, but they are at least stronger and more characteristic than most of the pink-and-white blushing-and-weeping nonentities of the time. In his day and way, and in his short sick life, Brown made a beginning of which American fiction need in no wise be ashamed. If he was unduly influenced by darksome or lurid romance, by emotions more vague than properly mysterious, and by a storm of sentiment that seems far enough away from

the intensely real sentiment of "The Scarlet Letter" and "The Marble Faun," let us remember that all Germany and half England were swept by the flood whose farthest waves moved him in his path. At the worst he never wrote aught so wretched as "The Sorrows of Werther"; while at the best his work foreshowed the triumphs to be won by the three greatest of his successors among American novelists.

From Irving, however, not Brown, came the widely apparent commencement of our native fiction. He wrote no novel, or romance, nor had he the constructive art which would have made such a venture successful. But the Hudson stories in "The Sketch-Book" combine nearly every merit that can be found or wished in a tale of humor. They are local in scene and character, strong in delineation of the personages introduced, and thoroughly artistic in literary form and elaboration. Description of natural scenery, rollicking fun, and suggested pathos are combined in a graceful and delightful whole. Irving, as a tale-maker, applied a confident and manifest linguistic skill to the production and perpetuation of an indigenous literary creation. New York and old England found in him a writer whose charm was instantly recognizable, and was pervasive, not strenuously novel or self-assertive. Pleasure preceded analysis on the reader's part, and the product seemed too spontaneous to suggest the *labor limae* behind. When to novelty in theme and form was

Washington Irving, 1783–1859.

added the easy serenity of an assured and confident literary touch, American fiction had clearly passed beyond the stage of apology and curiosity. A success need not be in the "grand manner" in order to be conspicuous and enduring; if it remain, as the years go on, secure from rivalry or even imitation, and if author and tale seem indissolubly related to each other, readers and critics have but to enjoy and record the triumph. That which is self-centred and manifest in its success is gratefully to be accepted; critical study may follow if it will, or be dispensed with altogether.

The true beginner of American fiction.

Throughout the essays of Irving, as in "The Spectator" and its followers, there runs a thread which suggests the novelist. The pictures of persons in the humorous or pathetic papers of "The Sketch-Book," the delineations of English country life in "Bracebridge Hall," the romantic portrayals of castle or battle in the Spanish histories and biographies, the wider constructiveness of "Knickerbocker's History of New York," at once take us back to the creator of Sir Roger de Coverley. Addison, in "The Spectator," was social satirist, genial essayist, literary critic, religious philosopher, precursor of journalist and magazinist, and forerunner of all eighteenth century English fiction as well. Irving led no procession in which a new De Foe, Richardson, Fielding or Goldsmith appeared, but he taught Americans to "paint the prospect from their door," if they would win any

The novelist in Irving.

success worth having. Brown's aim was too high for his powers or strength; Irving measured his capacities of creation, elaboration, and adornment with entire accuracy, save in the fields of history and travel. All that lay within him, as far as the writing of fiction was concerned, he gave us; and that his success was no accident, but the nice adjustment of mind to theme, is shown by the fact that, in their way, the English sketches are as good as the American, and that in the many-toned "Tales of a Traveller" or such a foreign fun-sketch as "The Spectre Bridegroom" the charm of the two greater and more characteristic triumphs is not lost to sight. He who had early begun to portray with dainty skill, not untouched by the kindly exaggeration then in vogue, the several characters introduced in "Salmagundi," was able in his many succeeding works to transfer the same power to other lands and times and themes.

Irving possessed the sympathy and the observant faculty which should belong to the novelist; and his wisdom in the choice of really indigenous themes, combined elsewhere with a catholic temper and the enrichment of thought which foreign travel bestows, admirably fitted him for his task. A single step from his proper fields, of course, would have made him ridiculous. However one large novelist differs from another, we can at least conceive for him other triumphs than those he wins. Irving was not a large novelist, and our thought

His fields and triumph.

cannot imagine in his case any triumph different from that which he attained. But in the history of the fiction of his native land his place cannot change. Thus far only Irving, Cooper, Poe and Hawthorne emerge in significance from the multiplying procession, and Irving leads the list in point of time. Without Cooper's broad constructiveness, he at least avoided Cooper's prolixity, flatness, irregularity, and preposterous excursions in the service of patriotic or denominational propagandism. Even his vine-around-the-oak women are not such poor, boneless creatures as those in the pages of his eminent contemporary. Comparisons, however, are not specially illuminating in Irving's case. To claim for him more than we have here done would be folly; to assert less would be ignorance.

James Kirke Paulding, 1779–1860.

Irving's friend and fellow-worker, Paulding, once mentioned almost on terms of equality with the author of "The Sketch-Book," is now but a figure of the past in the story of American letters. Born a little before Irving, he survived him, dying just previous to the civil war; so that in his long lifetime as a writer he witnessed the entire development of the national mind in the creative fields of literature. William Irving was Paulding's brother-in-law, and naturally Paulding, whose tastes were those of the humorous essayist and sketch-maker, became a useful co-worker on "Salmagundi," of a second series of which he was the sole writer. Such literature of the town, of

course, could not endure; of all the rich periodical store of England in the eighteenth century not a dozen essays, outside of "The Spectator," are read to-day; and the "whim-whams" of these early censors of New York society do not interest a city that has already forgotten even the "Potiphar Papers" of Curtis, written a long generation later. A certain added dignity, for the time, was given to Paulding's skits and sketches, patriotic brochures, life of Washington, poems and novels, by his important place in politics, for he was long navy-agent in New York, and was secretary of the navy in the administration of President Van Buren (1838–1841). But the name of his best novel, "The Dutchman's Fireside," survived the fleeting fame of all his lesser writings, and now-a-days even "The Dutchman's Fireside" lingers in the mind as a title rather than a thing. Twenty years ago several of Paulding's more significant writings were neatly reissued, under the affectionate yet discreet editorship of his son; but they had lost their power to charm or interest any considerable number of readers. The characters in his novels were sometimes drawn with conspicuous freshness and strength, and there was swiftly flashing fire or crackling fun in some of his satires of the ways of "John Bull," or praises of the words and doings of honest "Brother Jonathan." As far as local theme and picture were concerned,—watched with a quick eye and delineated with a patriotic pen,—Paulding was a useful fellow-worker with those who were begin-

ning to give America a literature of her own; but something more is needed in a book that is to live. Paulding wrote just as he thought, without the artistic touch and without painstaking development; his first public was not a critical one; but his later readers properly demanded literary art, rather than mere spontaneity and vigor. The spirit of time and place must indeed be caught, but it must be imprisoned in a definite artistic form if it would go down the years. One-half of the novels of Cooper himself are deservedly neglected for the same reason that leaves "The Dutchman's Fireside" and "Westward Ho" in the shadow of the procession of years,—which is, in brief, that they proffer an original creation ignobly wrought. Paulding sacrificed too much to the wish to be bright and readable. This wish he attained, for certainly "The Dutchman's Fireside," with all its queer union of sentimentality and playfulness, and its occasional absurdities of sensationalism, is more readable than the worse half of Cooper's novels, which sometimes move with an elephantine tread. Let us not blame too severely those writers who sought to give vivacity to American stories and sketches between 1800 and 1850; for assuredly that quality had been none too apparent in the dull theologico-philosophical days that had filled up so large a part of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the colonies. Paulding failed honorably in a pioneer's path, wherein he lacked for the most part both

critics and models; his pursuits were not wholly those of the man-of-letters; and even in his failures he did some temporary service.

When the Indian peered into the windows that opened on "The Dutchman's Fireside," he was typical of the advent of native-Americanism in a literature which, save in its spontaneous political outburst, had been too conservatively colonial. He frightened the little girls who pored over Paulding's novel-pages and he frightened some of the timid respectables who thought nothing good that had an indigenous character, and nothing bad that was in accord with the approved foreign models. American literature, between 1775 and 1825, veered swiftly to and fro between humble subservience to European—that is English—leadership, and a self-conscious indignant "Brother-Jonathanism" that really was a different manifestation of the same feeling, the feeling of verdancy. But another sign, less conspicuous at first than the nationalism of Paulding or Cooper, was slowly beginning to appear. This was the ability to write smoothly and self-respectingly without haste or local assertiveness, on whatsoever theme might be selected. Such ability was really the cause of Irving's international success, and the general lack of it, as has also just been said, made Paulding an ephemeral writer, and remanded some of Cooper's novels to a low plane of merit. This seemingly artless grace, this power to write well, was illustrated now and then in the lesser and anonymous fiction of the begin-

ning of the second half-century of the nation. In "The Talisman" annual for 1829 (edited by Bryant, Sands, and Verplanck) is an excellent illustration of a quiet power upon which American fiction was to rely for its greatest triumphs. This example is in very truth, as its title tells us, "A Simple Tale"—so simple that it almost seems a capital parody on the very latest and most resultless "realism" of our day. The eventless story of a man and a woman, in a plain village, is told with fine finish, and that is all; but what more can be asked of thirty small pages? At the close of the daintily-turned little story, in my copy, there is written in the minute angular woman's-chirography of the period: "Very much like W. Irving"; and so it is; but it is also suggestive of Gerard de Nerval, or any other exquisite turner of rural episodes into clear-cut minor fiction. To take a subject near at hand; to treat it well, with deliberateness of art and restrained delicacy of humor; and to print the sketch so made, leaving its fate to take care of itself—all this was precisely what was significant of the true beginning of American fiction, whether it was to be great or little. That beginning had at length been made; and though its quiet progress was to be profoundly affected, and turned forward or aside, by the individual strength of a force like Cooper, it was also to be absorbed and magnified in the more perfect grace of a Hawthorne.

"A Simple Tale."

CHAPTER IX.

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER.

In the quartette of greatest American writers of fiction Cooper occupies a sufficiently secure place. To juvenile or hasty readers the charm of his narratives is so quickly apparent that it is uncritically and almost thoughtlessly accepted; while to maturer or more philosophic minds his demerits are so constantly visible that some deliberate reflection is demanded before his essential excellence is allowed. A novel by Cooper appears almost a childish performance when placed beside a novel by George Eliot or a romance by Hawthorne. The prevalent taste calls for a nicer analysis and a more delicate touch than the author of "The Deerslayer" could bestow. The graces of art appear but irregularly in Cooper's fiction, and never adorn a complete novel. His success has always depended upon force of creation and vigor of description; and herein lies his proper claim to the renown so long granted. Creation and description, in a novel, are best when adorned with the utmost skill of art; but no one can question their value, even when crudely set forth.

James Fenimore Cooper, 1789–1851.

Personally, Cooper's temper was nothing less

than ferocious; and this temper he sometimes allowed to lead him in choice of themes and treatment of plots. Hence the long list of his books is splashed with frequent blots. An intense patriot, he contrived, both as person and as author, to offend readers at home and abroad. A man whose application of Christian principle should first have been made upon his own irascible character, he undertook to promulgate the faith in the form of polemic fiction. He whose greatest powers, when fully displayed, were those of a strong and brilliant novelist of the trackless woods and seas, essayed to write a "fashionable" novel of society. That old-time string of melodramatic adjectives, "odious, insidious, hideous, and perfidious," was assuredly inapplicable to this great honest straightforward force, whose career of libel-suits and quarrels would best be described by the term litigious. When free, he could be as destructive as Victor Hugo's loose cannon on shipboard; when self-contained in his own proper field, no American could dispute, as none could equal, his solid success. By his triumphs in one place he made us forgive and forget his failures in another. Cooper developed, and by right of eminent domain may almost be said to have discovered, the wilder American field for fiction, and he is the sea-novelist of the English language.

It is axiomatic to say that Cooper was a follower of Scott. But this means no more than that he was a romantic story-teller. The scenes and characters chosen by the two writers could

hardly be more unlike than they are. Cooper read Scott, as did everybody; but his pages are little influenced by the Wizard of the North. The similarities between the two writers are simply those due to the fact that each made a romantic portrayal of humanity, noble and base, cultured and savage, in chivalrous adventure, in exciting plot and counterplot, and in manly and womanly affection and ambition. As well call Victor Hugo the Scott of France as apply to this most characteristic American of his time any term implying servile indebtedness.

The "American Scott."

The prodigality of Cooper's pen, after it had fairly set to work, was a mark of the English fiction of the century. Half-a-dozen novelists might be named, in Great Britain and the United States, who have among themselves written more stories than a single reader can profitably absorb in a lifetime. That fertility which in Scott was due to pride and consequent financial need, and which in such writers as Trollope and Mrs. Oliphant is mere inveterateness of literary habit, sprang in Cooper from the lusty wealth of his vigorous intellectual nature, to which labor was scarcely more than recreation. A midshipman in youth, he was a hearty literary adventurer in middle life, merely transferring to pen and ink that chivalric combativeness and fondness for novelty that would have made him a discoverer, a crusader, or a pirate, a few centuries before.

Prodigality in fiction.

This element in his personal character readily

accounts for his literary over-productiveness, and for the irregular value of his long list of books. Let no one go to Cooper, as to Hawthorne, for instruction in the arts of style. Pages, chapters, and whole volumes will be found without difficulty, which may quickly be separated from the valuable part of the author's product. Words are sometimes fairly thrown away; a single idea is expanded at tiresome length; and the narrative sadly drags, when that narrative should be all in all. Prolixity and tediousness are serious faults in one whose literary business is to tell a tale. Cooper's tediousness differs from Dickens' in that the latter actively turns and returns in the same corner of a field, while the former seems to try to move, but with sluggish steps. Cooper has been termed a "panoramic" novelist. Everyone who has sat in childhood before one of those innocuous and mildly instructive entertainments which preceded the days of the stereopticon, well remember how the simple machinery would at times halt and finally get hopelessly caught, so that the beholder became wearied of an immovable picture, while the poor manipulator was vainly endeavoring to remedy the evil. So it sometimes seems in the case of Cooper's panoramas. At such times the enèrgetic author, like the panorama-showman, is as vexed as his audience, but hardly knows how to proceed. There are long delays, of course, in any career of adventure; one complains only when

Cooper's irregularity of work.

they are introduced into the printed page not from artistic intention but from defect of creation.

The mature student of Cooper's works, therefore, finds at the start a sufficiently serious array of demerits. Cooper was fluent but not artistic; he wrote hurriedly, carelessly, and therefore too voluminously; he wasted his strength and his manuscripts in "patriotic," political, and personal squabbles; he failed almost completely as a social painter and as a creator of "novels with a purpose," theological, satirical, or other. He could not undertake with the slightest confidence of success the delineation of women or children. The ordinary class of cultured men he portrayed better, but even here his touch was insecure. Instead of recognizing his defects, and trying either to correct them or to modify his choice of themes and his methods of treatment, he fell into an inveterate habit of replying to, or sueing at law, those who had criticised him. The "grim" humor of some of the characters in his books seemed unfortunately lacking in his own character; its presence would have saved him from many mistakes.

As a preliminary to an examination and hearty recognition of Cooper's great and enduring merits, it will therefore be well, at the start, to eliminate the unimportant titles from his long list of published writings. His contributions to periodical literature, with the exception of his naval sketches, were few and non-significant, for he early entered upon a career of popularity

His minor writings.

which spared him the necessity or temptation to write miscellaneous minor sketches. He had no capacity for the production of short stories, which he very wisely left unattempted, with one unfortunate exception; and in his day the monthly magazines of America were unable to pay high prices for serial fiction. When he wished to address his public briefly on any theme of earnest exhortation or bitter reply, his words were more direct and forcible than ornate; as a letter-writer and pamphleteer he thought of effect rather than means, nor did he fully realize how important is style to a Junius, not less than to an Addison or an Irving. He was certainly sufficiently violent, and sufficiently comprehensive in his choice of subjects for attack; he never learned to avoid the rhetorical error of attempting too much. Once aroused, he hurried along, too fast and too far, confounding in his onslaught the just and the unjust, the part and the whole. With him, "Hints on the Social and Civic Relations of the United States of America" easily became positive statements of the demoniac tendencies of the entire newspaper press of his country, which was poisoning the national moral sense, and was existing but as an instrument of wickedness. James Gates Percival once launched "Salmoneus-thunderbolts . . . . at the comfortable little city of Hartford, because the poet fancied that the inhabitants thereof did not like him or his verses so much as he himself did;"* and politely penned the following request:

Cooper as controversialist.

* James Russell Lowell. "My Study Windows." 182.

"Wrapped in sheets of gory lightning,
While cursed night hags ring thy knell,
May the arm of vengeance bright'ning,
O'er thee wave the sword of hell!

"May a sudden inundation
Rise in many a roaring wave,
And with hurried devastation
Whelm thy thousands in the grave.

"When the flood, in fury swelling,
Heaves their corpses on the shore,
May fell hyæns, madly yelling,
Tear their limbs and drink their gore."

Cooper, as a controversialist, was scarcely less explicit in the utterance of his wishes, which also found expression in his books of travel, now wholly unread and justly forgotten, and in his satirical "international" novels. Let him who wishes to explore the depths into which a great American writer fell when he sought to satirize the faults of his actual country, and to portray his ideal men and women, endeavor to read that remarkable production, "Home as Found." Cooper, in the very fatuity of foolhardiness, even endeavored to follow Swift in a more general satire, and "The Monikins" was the result. It must be remembered, however, that the sentimentalism of the day, when it turned sour, was very acetic indeed; and that too large a part of the English press, as well as of the American, showed toward Cooper a virulent injustice that was nothing less than indecent, and would not now-a-days be tolerated for a moment. This injustice was repeat-

edly displayed by some of the gravest and weightiest periodicals of the language, sample utterances of which may be found in Lounsbury's excellent life of Cooper. But if Cooper's critics lost their manners in their attacks, Cooper himself lost his senses in his replies. However, if there is one thing in the world which Time buries more quickly and more deeply than a book-review, it is an author's reply to that review. The furious controversies, whether *pro* or *con*, which were for so many years connected with Cooper's personal character, records of American and European sight-seeing (calculated, as by the very perversity of unintention, to exasperate Americans and Europeans alike), and comments on American naval history, are impartially consigned to the secure oblivion of some dusty file of defunct newspapers.

A more unkind neglect has also fallen upon Cooper's "History of the Navy of the United States of America" (1839; condensed in 1841), and "Lives of Distinguished American Naval Officers" (1846). For the preparation of these works Cooper possessed somewhat unusual qualifications. Early familiar with the sea and with the American navy, he never lost his interest in either. Marine adventure, furthermore, was a theme which no one could treat more vigorously and effectively than he; and many pages of these two works display the characteristics of descriptive style which have made Cooper, and not Marryat, the great sea-novelist.

Naval history and biography.

The volumes, furthermore, were by no means a superficial gloss upon carelessly gathered facts; Cooper sought his materials at first hand, and in their use fell into no fiercer controversies than have beset the literary and personal path of the chief historian of the United States, though, in Cooper's case, these controversies, as usual, got into the courts of law. He sought the truth, published it without fear or favor, and defended it when questioned, earnestly but with unusual gravity and self-possession. The exact reason for the public inattention toward this history is not readily to be stated; perhaps the decline of the American commerce and navy, only to be revived by broader legislation or some great war, may have something to do with the national neglect of that which once was a matter of intensest patriotic pride. A nearer and more obvious reason lies in the fact that, after all, only the great histories live —those in which a noble theme is deliberately handled with patient research, with philosophic spirit, and with artistic finish. Cooper displayed the first quality in due measure and the second in a degree surprising in view of his usual temptations and failures; but in the third his haste denied him such successes as were not won by his natural powers in spontaneous action. At a time when Irving's histories and biographies, for reasons elsewhere discussed, are fading rather than brightening, it is not strange that Cooper, as historian, fares yet worse.

Turning finally to Cooper's novels, issued in

several competing editions, read by eager thousands, and forming, practically, the sole basis upon which rests his present fame, and upon which all future claims for prominence must depend, we find that some of these also may quite readily be dismissed from the list of those entitled to the most respectful critical mention; or may be abandoned with the flotsam and jetsam of the literary tides. Such, it seems to me, are "The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish," "Afloat and Ashore," "Miles Wallingford," "Satanstoe," "The Chainbearer," "The Redskins," "Wyandotte," "Wing and Wing," "The Two Admirals," "Homeward Bound," "The Crater," "Jack Tier," "The Sea Lions," "The Oak Openings," "The Heidenmauer," "The Headsman," and "Mercedes of Castile." These seventeen novels, though in themselves sufficient to justify the fame of some lesser novelists, are in plan or execution inferior to the masterpieces which chiefly lend honor to Cooper's name. As in the Waverley Novels themselves, we find that inveterate inventiveness and rapidity of composition naturally result in great irregularity of product. "The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish" is worth saving if but for its lovely title—as musical and as characteristically American as Kennedy's "Swallow Barn." This title, however, proved as unwelcome to the foreign reprinters as did that of Hawthorne's "Marble Faun," and was similarly thrown aside. The theme of the book—and the secret of its failure—is to be found in its title as

The lesser novels.

changed in France: "The Puritans of America." Cooper was always feeble in satire; and his New England stories, even "Lionel Lincoln," are untrue to the local character or ineffective in its delineation. Into Puritanism, which he not unnaturally hated, Cooper had no real insight; and even a hater must understand if he would effectively denounce. "The Redskins," too, proffers at the start an atttactive name, but follows it with hundreds of pages in which, as in its immediate predecessors "Satanstoe" and "The Chainbearer," bombast, haste and unmerited contempt for New Englanders disfigure and almost destroy the would-be delineations of New York colonial life and adventure in the eighteenth century. In addition to his frequent attempts to ridicule Congregationalism and magnify Episcopacy, Cooper was here endeavoring to make patroon landlords agreeable and "anti-renters" odious. Now, however attractive may be Episcopacy or paternalism in comparison with Puritanism or anarchistic agrarianism, it cannot be said that Cooper's controversial defences were other than injurious to the side he espoused. It is true that "Satanstoe" was not lacking in force, and that the denunciations, in these stories, of the selfish ferocity of ignorant communism, and thieving no-rent land-tenure in general, are instructive to-day; but one regrets that Cooper did not restrain and command his powers until they should strike terribly against a terrible evil,

and not waste their force in the moment of the stroke.

"Satanstoe" had been preceded by the four volumes of "Afloat and Ashore"; or "The adventures of Miles Wallingford,"—the third and fourth of which are now reissued under the name of their hero. It was followed by "The Chainbearer," in which the evil deeds of a Puritan product are further elaborated. Judging by this loosely connected series one would say that the prevalent fashion of dovetailing different works of fiction by the introduction of the same characters, scenes or ideas was no element of strength in Cooper; but we shall see that in the "Leather-Stocking" series it was connected with his noblest and more characteristic success. Only when Cooper misjudged his proper field and powers, or slighted his task, did he produce those works which long damaged his reputation and are most advantageous in obscurity.

Series of novels.

In those of Cooper's novels which have to do with the sea, such as "The Two Admirals," or "Wing and Wing," the reader is interested in the adventures described but not in the characters portrayed. It seems strange, but it is true, that the creator of the individual and almost immortal character of Natty Bumppo was content to people his pages with preposterous fools; inconsequential heroes; and timid, blushing fainting "female" Turveydrops. As far as the characters are concerned, the reader of "Homeward Bound" is almost sorry that they sur-

vived to visit "Home as Found." But the events and episodes, the chases and battles and storms and disciplines of "Homeward Bound," "The Two Admirals," or "Wing and Wing," and the action in the land novels attract those who are willing to endure Cooper's tiresome prefaces and long-winded arguments or dogmatic *ipse dixit* proofs that a Roman Catholic should not marry an infidel; that an Episcopal damsel cannot safely bestow her hand upon a High Arian; that the Congregational churches of New England include hypocritical rascals in their lists of members; or even that, as in the preposterous finale to "The Crater," a returning Episcopalian may find his former home, a Pacific reef, engulfed with all its evil sectarian population, whether Friend, Baptist, Methodist or Presbyterian,—so that this excellent liturgist may triumphantly exclaim in Swinburne's words over his "Forsaken Garden," that he has lived

Cooper as dogmatist.

"Till the slow sea rise and the sheer cliff crumble,
Till terrace and meadow the deep gulfs drink,
Till the strength of the waves of the high tides humble
The fields that lessen, the rocks that shrink;
Here now in his triumph where all things falter,
Stretched out on the spoils that his own hands spread,
As a god self-slain on his own strange altar,
Death lies dead."

Meanwhile the greater part of Cooper's public prefers his accounts of the French privateer to his defences of the Athanasian creed, and solaces itself with the author's vigor and vitality, at the

expense of his long prefaces, diatribes against New England, laudations of placid patroonism, or violent commendations of the American system at its best, versus the effete despotisms of Europe. The various novels just mentioned were one and all read—and are still read, if at all—as stories simply. That they could survive their personages and their preachments indicates that, beneath all their rubbish, some vital spark must have been steadily smouldering. But the lesser novels of Cooper, in fact, are now little read by mature and critical minds; their public is, as I have said, for the most part juvenile and unthoughtful, composed of those who "like" the better stories, and wish to continue the pleasure they have found. When a discreet reader, familiar, at least in part, with Hawthorne, Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Scott and Cooper at his best, takes up one of them, some impression of inanity, verbosity, prejudice, or propagandism can hardly be avoided. As he reads their pages he will be half ready to declare Cooper an overpraised figure of the past, whose books have none but a relative interest or importance.

His great merits.

But now we turn to the golden side and the nobler books, and find their merits heightened by the frank contrast we have made. Forgotten are the fury of controversy, the litigation of libel suits, the crude satires at the expense of social errors, the well-meant defences of the ever-attractive Protestant Episcopal Church, the ill-meant vituperation of the Puritan

New Englanders. There comes into full view the characteristic story-teller of American woods and waters, he who caught and delineated in romantic novels the adventurous spirit of unfettered men and unmeasured Nature. Cooper is, over all, his country's novelist of action, and action ever charms when analysis wearies or invention flags. Antedating Hawthorne in fame, surpassing Irving at least in vigor of stroke and extent of field, and standing utterly aside from Poe, Cooper first wore the novelist's crown in lands west of the Atlantic. His mind was remarkably fertile in planning plots of adventure, and sometimes in elaborating those plots so that incident succeeded incident without wearisomeness or lack of novelty or probability. It has been said that Cooper had no style: but if his fiery and thrilling episodes of adventure on sea or land are not successful because he was a master of the story-teller's style, his readers have been remarkably influenced by some literary power as yet unnamed. Had he paused longer in search of words, his action, swift in its best passages, would have dragged; but in such passages he does pause long enough to choose words that fit the purpose in hand. The storms and calms of the ocean and the "inland seas" of the great American lakes; the fortunes of merchant-ship, privateer or man-of-war; the peculiar humor of certain vividly-drawn characters previously unfamiliar; the sombre North American Indian in all his majesty and treachery; the Pathfinder of the woods, trackless to all but him;

the infinite wealth of the rude life of the rifle and the wigwam—of these James Fenimore Cooper was a master. Others may yet challenge and surpass his success as a sea-novelist, though, in these days of swift steamships, iron-clads, and long-range cannon, none has yet done so. But as the Indian character becomes more civilized and the Indian home moves farther westward, none will repeat the triumphs of the creator of Chingachgook and Uncas, and of their Caucasian counterpart the Pathfinder. The last-named, and his environment, are not to be criticised; they are to be admired.

The five "Leather-Stocking Tales"—"The Pioneers, or, The Sources of the Susquehanna"; "The Last of the Mohicans, a Narrative of 1757"; "The Prairie, a Tale"; "The Pathfinder, or, The Inland Sea"; "The Deerslayer, or, The First War-Path"—were written between 1823 and 1841, "in a very desultory and inartificial manner," said Cooper in his final preface to the series. Having terminated the career of Leather-Stocking in "The Prairie," and laid him in his grave, the author was induced by "a latent regard for this character to resuscitate him in 'The Pathfinder.'" The logical order of the five, centreing around this hero, is "The Deerslayer," "The Last of the Mohicans," "The Pathfinder," "The Pioneers," and "The Prairie." Cooper himself perceived that "if anything from the pen of the writer of these romances is to outlive himself, it is, unquestionably, the series of

The "Leather-Stocking Tales."

'The Leather-Stocking Tales.'" He recognized their faults of haste and lack of harmony, and was well aware of the thoughtless way in which his books were devoured at the time, without reference to lasting value. Nor did he prophesy for himself with any certainty, even here, a survival in literature when novelty should have become worn away. But his "man of the forest," though "purely a creation," proved to be a creation indigenous, forceful, broadly human, and therefore perennial. In his creation, too, Cooper exerted all his own strength, and also relied upon an essentially fine and often deliberate art—displayed even in this preface, by far the best he ever wrote. The hard facts of life and the wiry nature of the hero were held up in the poetic view of the imagination. Human nature, in unfettered nobility and a fresh environment, and yet with human sins and foibles, was nobly painted. So it was with Cooper's pictures of the Indians who were Natty Bumppo's fellows and unconscious teachers. "It is the privilege of all writers of fiction," he justly said and constantly felt, "more particularly when their works aspire to the elevation of romances, to present the *beau-ideal* of their characters to the reader." Cooper was a large creator and a conscious artist, who perceived a "beau-ideal" even in—especially in—Bumppo and the redskins. The American note, *isolated inheritance working freshly*, was clearly struck in this definite and lastingly valuable quintette of romantic novels. Cooper's large and human heart beat responsive

to truth. He felt what he saw; and he had the national faculty of "thinking straight and seeing clear." Therefore he was both picturesque and pathetic—how often do those adjectives combine! —in his delineations of a fading troop and a passing time. Instead of the artificial Gothicism of "The Castle of Otranto," the sentimentality of "The Man of Feeling," the portentous romanticism of "The Mysteries of Udolpho," or, in general, "Man as he Is Not," Cooper gave us a veritable "Simple Story," combining "Nature and Art," in a "Romance of the Forest," as truly though not as perfectly as did Goldsmith in the inimitable "Vicar." *

Cooper's huntsman—brave, cool, slightly suspicious and slow of word and act, but honest, manly and human—was more indigenous and more widely interesting to his countrymen than Irving's Rip Van Winkle, Ichabod Crane, or Knickerbocker Dutchmen. His Indians, too, were surely of the soil, though not of the race that was producing a native literature. Fortunately Cooper's greatest strength lay in the creations which were most needed, most interesting, and therefore most valuable. The scenes of domestic fiction, or its miscellaneous characters, could be better painted by other hands; therein Cooper failed outright or achieved success but at random. His proper domain was the borderland between barbarism and civilization.

Cooper's domain.

* The very titles of these and others in Mrs. Barbauld's "British Novelists" series are historically significant.

In "The Spy" and "Lionel Lincoln," dealing with the Revolution, Cooper also exploited the field of local history, and so far as adventure and action were concerned he was not unsuccessful. Like a trained hound, his powers and beauty were visible in motion rather than at rest; in conflict, not in home-life. "The Red Rover" and "The Pilot," of the sea-tales, excel in their encounters and escapes; they halt in their love-episodes and conversational discussions. The "problems of life," in the English or the Russian sense, seldom troubled Cooper; and when they did, they troubled his readers vastly more. We go to him with the demand: "Tell us a story," not with the plea: "Help us in solving the riddle of existence." Cooper, therefore, remains the American story-teller, the national novelist of the days before analysis became fashionable. After all, most novelists' fame is built up by large constructiveness and not by decorative details. The majority of readers is not composed of analysts and critics, constantly bothered with the *why* and the *how*. Cooper created stories which conquered their readers, and he succeeded on the old-fashioned lines. After all, a novel must entertain, and a cloud of witnesses attest Cooper's entertainingness. His most prominent quality, as a novelist, was wholesome independence of thought and speech, a quality that lies at the bottom of the success of the masters, Cervantes and Le Sage, De Foe and Goldsmith. Those story-tellers, too,

Sea-tales.

Our novelist of action, on land or sea.

were honestly national, as was Cooper. Independence and nationality are not enough to make a novel, but when the bases of constructive power they are sure to promote literary triumph. And careless largeness is more attractive, in the long run, than careful pettiness. If we must have but one, let it be the first. Therein is the indispensable element in the "Leather-Stocking Tales," which makes us refuse to give them up, or to challenge their right to their individual place in literature and in our favor. Natty Bumppo and Long Tom Coffin are better known to us, more real personalities, than half our cousins. The last sea-fight; the whale-capture, or the killing of the panther; the wild justice of the wronged Indian's vengeance; the fierce plot and counter-plot of the contestants in the Revolution, or of the pioneers of France and England in the new world; and all the parti-colored panorama of the American man in action, cannot cease to charm those who have blood in their veins and muscles in their arms.

Even in our recognition of Cooper's peculiar and unquestioned triumphs there steals anew the question: How can these triumphs be consistent with the failures that accompanied them? The creator of the "Leather-Stocking Tales" began his career of authorship with the novel "Precaution," and closed it with "The Ways of the Hour." In both, as in so many intermediate books, symmetry, verisimilitude, and progressive interest are precisely the lacking qualities. Like

a hundred eminent authors, Cooper could not measure his weakness, though he could, and did, rightly estimate his strength. "The Spy," "The Pioneers," "The Pilot," "Lionel Lincoln," "The Last of the Mohicans," "The Prairie," and "The Red Rover," followed immediately upon the publication of "Precaution," in consecutive order, and in the eight years including 1821 and 1828. I know not where to find, outside of Scott's work, a greater example of affluence in the production of fiction. In haste and uncertainty, with no friendly coterie of discreet advisers, with a public indifferent at home and hostile abroad, Cooper wrote and published that vigorous and enduring book which brought before us the manly, individual American character of Harvey Birch. Single-handed, he gave us a novel and a hero, because the power within him lay. The instant success he won was a proper stimulant toward the production of "The Pioneers." That novel "drags" seriously in the hands of those of us who read it to-day; but it calls for no strong effort of imagination to see how enthusiastically, in 1823, we would have hailed its germs of the "Leather-Stocking" development, in full and final form. The literary possibilities of the hero, of the Indians, and of the opening of the new American land evidently lay in the author's mind, who turned from the Revolution to the forest-clearing with the spontaneity of natural strength. The first month of the very next year added "The Pilot" to the previous successes: a third

"The Spy."

book, unlike either of its predecessors, and without a prominent prototype in English fiction. "The Pilot," in character and event, perhaps seems just to miss the possibilities of the theme; but the wonder lies in what Cooper could give, not in what he missed. The breath of the book is the salt air of the veritable Atlantic; its action is that of life. Nowhere else did Cooper come so near an adequate delineation of women's character, or a rememberable portrayal of the natural elements of scenes on water and on land. Its hero is drawn in effective tints, and his figure is both impressive in its distinctness and ideal in its shadows. The marine knowledge is practically infallible, at least for readers on land; while the Revolutionary times are originally treated by the transfer of the action to a foreign shore. Next came "Lionel Lincoln; or, The Leaguers of Boston," with its vivid accounts of the great battles of '75 on Massachusetts soil, and with a power not usually shown by its author in depicting his minor characters. "The Last of the Mohicans" may not inaccurately be said to have charmed two continents, in the dash of its doings, the peculiar majesty of its leading Caucasian and Aboriginal characters, and the fresh upland woodsy air that exhaled from its vivifying pages. In "The Prairie" the pathos of inevitable death was mitigated by those visions and reflections which console in every race and literature; while in "The

"The Pilot."

"Lionel Lincoln."

Red Rover" we are once more spirited far out upon the scenes of that multiform unity, the ocean.

At the time of the publication of this vigorously-successful tale of adventure on the deep, Cooper had reached a deserved and really commanding popularity. The abounding personality of the man seemed to have freer scope on sea than on land, and in "The Red Rover" we surrender ourselves to a competent literary captain, whose eccentricities and disputatiousness rather add to his attractiveness. When, as in "The Bravo," published three years later, Cooper redoubled his attention to didactic and intense propagandism of democratic ideas, the power of "The Red Rover" or "The Last of the Mohicans," or "The Spy," was really diminished by a non-literary force, pulling partly in a contrary direction. In this, and so many of the later books, unwisdom or extravagance tended to minimize the success already won. But that success was won, and was to endure. For convenience' sake, the worse Cooper has here been studied before the better, that the just impression, in the logical order, might be left upon the reader's mind. But in the chronological order we must not forget that Cooper attained, before he was forty, an established rank which his follies and irregularities might impair but could never destroy. Of his eight first books all but one ("Precaution") was distinctly and lastingly suc-

"The Red Rover."

"The Bravo."

cessful;* and several later books were worthy additions to this select list.

James Fenimore Cooper created, developed, and completed, in Leather-Stocking, one of the most natural and significant and attractive characters in the fiction of all lands.† He delineated in Chingachgook and Uncas, with that poetic justice which is a proper union of true poetry and strict equity, the character of the Indian at his best. Elsewhere in that remarkable though heterogeneous list of novels whose very titles are like characteristic outbursts of natural music, he displayed the literary powers of a leader on the land and a veritable master on the sea.

Cooper's special achievements.

Considering in its entirety the literary career of Cooper, and viewing it from a point nearly forty years after his death, we can see how it was affected by the conditions of the time in which he lived and wrote. Timid colonialism had not yet emerged from its state of long-continued deference toward England; and when it occasionally sought to throw off the trammels, it rushed, for the moment, to an opposite extreme of strident self-assertion. Hence, on Cooper's own part, the timidity of "Precaution"

Conditions of Cooper's time.

* I by no means agree with the customary detraction of "Lionel Lincoln."

† "The series was a perfect one as it was left. The life of Leather-Stocking was now a complete drama in five acts, beginning with the first war-path in "The Deerslayer," followed by his career of activity and of love in "The Last of the Mohicans" and "The Pathfinder," and his old age and death in "The Pioneers" and "The Prairie."—Thomas R. Lounsbury, "James Fenimore Cooper," 239.

and the contemptuousness of "Home as Found;" or on the other hand, "The Pathfinder;" the novels attacking the aristocratic feudalism of Europe, and the honest patriotism of the naval history and biographies. Meanwhile, Cooper's public veered long between a fear to praise him too quickly, and an overweening pride in his world-wide fame; between delight at his attacks upon the effeteness of the old world, and indignation at his outspoken criticisms of the new. Again, the waste of the American intellectual life was very apparent in Cooper's work. The Puritans had devoted their mental strength to propagandism of a peculiar religious creed and system; so, in his way, and in considerable measure, did Cooper. The creative vigor of the eighteenth century, in the colonies, had principally been applied to the solution of problems of independent statecraft; and thus Cooper, a few decades later, felt bound to enlighten two continents concerning his views of the political fabric and human society in an actual or ideal state. Freed from the necessities which have obliged so many American writers to devote three-fourths of their time to some wage-earning drudgery, Cooper, in the very wantonness of that diffuseness and haste which marked the westward spread of civilization after 1800, took up most energetically many an unnecessary task for which he was not fitted; and seemed, as a natural state, to be "spoiling for a fight" of almost any sort. His ideas concerning "sweetness and light" in human life were about

as delicately attractive as his presentation of the "sweet reasonableness" of religion itself. Foremost, in his day, in denouncing American Philistinism, he was himself a Philistine of abounding vitality, to whom rest eternal would have been synonymous with everlasting woe. Claiming to be a proper American aristocrat, in him the ducal qualities of serene self-respect, and a gracious attitude toward less fortunate beings, never appeared in any conspicuous light. Only when he unconsciously lost himself in his work, and heartily threw his great body, his warm heart, and his honest Saxon soul into the written page, did he display the powers of his individuality in their noblest estate. The time in which he lived was not responsible for all his qualities, and certainly it disliked some of them with a cordiality which Cooper, on his part, reciprocated by bewailing or hating his time. But his character was unfavorably affected by the environment, which exaggerated his worse qualities at the very period, and for the very reason, that it gave full scope to his better.

Cooper died September 14, 1851, the day before his sixty-second birthday. A little more than five months later a commemorative meeting was held in New York, the city around which Cooper's literary life had chiefly moved, and which properly deemed itself most honored by those services which belonged to the country at large. Death had silenced those bitter and ephemeral outcries

Cooper, Irving, Bryant, and Webster.

which, chiefly through his own fault, had attended the novelist's career,—but which, indeed, were already forgotten by most of those not immediately friendly or personally hostile to Cooper. Daniel Webster, the representative statesman and orator of the time, was the presiding officer. Eight months later he, too, was to pass away, disappointed in his presidential aspirations, foreseeing the ruin of the Whig party, and shunned by the more excitable and mischievous extremists of both "sections" of the country. To Webster, however, more than to any other individual, or any group of individuals, was due the development and consolidation of that discreet and tolerant, but intense, Union sentiment which made the disruption of the republic impossible in the following decade. That masterly man had devoted his whole life—consistent even in its inconsistencies—to the idea of country, one and indivisible. Naturally, therefore, the essentially native and national quality of Cooper's novels was that most prominent in Webster's mind. "While the love of country continues to prevail," said he, "his memory will exist in the hearts of the people. So truly patriotic and American throughout, they should find a place in every American's library." The oration of the day, with equal propriety, fell from the lips of William Cullen Bryant. After the death of Irving (who had presided at the meeting preliminary to this commemoration) Bryant remained for twenty years the most distinguished citizen of New York. Irving had first

showed to America and Europe an indigenous literature, valuable in itself and not merely a curiosity. Cooper had first produced an American series of novels, and had carried the fame of his country's books to the Continent itself. Bryant had turned to solid poetic achievement the promise of those who had begun to sing at the period of the dawn of imagination in the United States. Of the four men, each in his way, had done a great and significant service, and the survivors gladly honored him who was the first to depart.

"It is worthy of note," said Mr. Bryant, "that just about the time that 'The Spy' made its appearance, the dawn of what we now call our literature was just breaking. The concluding number of Dana's 'Idle Man,' a work neglected at first, but now numbered among the best things of the kind in our language, was issued in the same month. The 'Sketch Book' was just then completed; the world was admiring it, and its author was meditating 'Bracebridge Hall.' Miss Sedgwick, about the same time, made her first essay in that charming series of novels of domestic life in New England, which have gained her so high a reputation. Percival, now unhappily silent, had just put to press a volume of poems. I have a copy of an edition of Halleck's 'Fanny,' published in the same year; the poem of 'Yamoyden,' by Eastburn and Sands, appeared almost simultaneously with it. Livingston was putting the finishing hand to his 'Report on the Penal Code of Louis-

Cooper in the early days of American literature.

iana,' a work written with such grave, persuasive eloquence, that it belongs as much to our literature as to our jurisprudence. Other contemporaneous American works there were, now less read. Paul Allen's poem of 'Noah' was just laid on the counters of the booksellers. Arden published at the same time, in this city, a translation of Ovid's 'Tristia,' in heroic verse, in which the complaints of the effeminate Roman poet were rendered with great fidelity to the original, and sometimes not without beauty. If I may speak of myself, it was in that year that I timidly entrusted to the winds and waves of public opinion a small cargo of my own—a poem entitled 'The Ages,' and half a dozen shorter ones, in a thin duodecimo volume."

In the course of this address, one of the earlier in the irregular series which the veteran Bryant delivered from time to time at the request of fellow-authors and fellow-citizens, he touched very kindly but perhaps sufficiently plainly upon most of the demerits, as well as the merits of the novels of land and sea considered in this chapter. His estimate of the character of Leather-Stocking, and of the five books in which his life is painted, is of historic value, as representing the more intelligent contemporary opinion at the time of their appearance. "The Prairie," on its publication in 1827, Bryant read "with a certain awe, an undefined sense of sublimity, such as one experiences on entering for the first time upon these immense grassy deserts from which the work takes its name." Its Indians were "copies of the Amer-

ican savage somewhat idealized, but not the less a part of the wild nature in which they have their haunts." Its pioneers lived "in a sort of primitive and patriarchal barbarism, sluggish on ordinary occasions but terrible when roused, like the hurricane that sweeps the grand but monotonous wilderness" in which they dwelt—a "natural growth of those ancient fields of the west." Leather-Stocking was "no less in harmony with the silent desert" in which he wandered. He was and is "a philosopher of the woods, ignorant of books, but instructed in all that nature, without the aid of science, could reveal to the man of quick senses and inquiring intellect, whose life has been passed under the open sky, and in companionship with a race whose animal perceptions are the acutest and most cultivated of which there is any example. But Leather-Stocking has higher qualities; in him there is a genial blending of the gentlest virtues of the civilized man with the better nature of the aboriginal tribes; all that in them is noble, generous, and ideal, is adopted into his own kindly character, and all that is evil is rejected. But why should I attempt to analyze a character so familiar? Leather-Stocking is acknowledged, on all hands, to be one of the noblest, as well as most striking and original creations of fiction. In some of his subsequent novels, Cooper—for he had not yet attained to the full maturity of his powers—heightened and ennobled his first conception of the character, but

in 'The Pioneers' it dazzled the world with the splendor of novelty."

In his peroration, which, as usual in eulogistic oratory, was too glowingly enthusiastic in its tributes and prophecies, Bryant found in the many translations of Cooper some portent that his works might thereby survive the language in which they were written. This speculative compliment need not detain our attention, for the succeeding quarter of a century has shown that English is to be—nay, is—the dominant language of the world, and that its distributing centre, at least as regards numbers of speakers and readers, is to pass to the nation of which Cooper chiefly wrote. Said Bryant: "In that way of writing in which he excelled, it seems to me that he united, in a pre-eminent degree, those qualities which enabled him to interest the largest number of readers. He wrote not for the fastidious, the over-refined, the morbidly delicate; for these find in his genius something too robust for their liking—something by which their sensibilities are too rudely shaken; but he wrote for mankind at large—for men and women in the ordinary healthful state of feeling—and in their admiration he found his reward. . . . Hence it is that he has earned a fame wider, I think, than any author of modern times—wider, certainly, than any author of any age ever enjoyed in his lifetime. All his excellencies are translatable—they pass readily into languages the least allied in their genius to that in which he

A national novelist of international fame.

wrote, and in them he touches the heart and kindles the imagination with the same power as in the original English. . . . . Such are the works so widely read, and so universally admired in all the zones of the globe, and by men of every kindred and every tongue; works which have made of those who dwell in remote latitudes, wanderers in our forests and observers of our manners, and have inspired them with an interest in our history. . . . . Over all the countries into whose speech this great man's works have been rendered by the labors of their scholars, the sorrow of that loss which we deplore is now diffusing itself. Here we lament the ornament of our country, there they mourn the death of him who delighted the human race. . . . . The creations of his genius, fixed in living words, survive the frail material organs by which the words were first traced. They partake of a middle nature, between the deathless mind and the decaying body of which they are the common offspring, and are therefore destined to a duration, if not eternal, yet indefinite. The examples he has given in his glorious fictions, of heroism, honor, and truth; of large sympathies between man and man, of all that is good, great, and excellent, embodied in personages marked with so strong an individuality that we place them among our friends and favorites; his frank and generous men, his gentle and noble women, shall live through centuries to come, and only perish with our language."

The cool-blooded Bryant was here too impetuous; but this, at least, we can say in agreement: Cooper, with a hundred faults, possessed the surpassing merit due to a large literary creator in a field which he found and made his own.

CHAPTER X.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.

THERE are some writers—not many, in the literature of any land—whom it is a spontaneous pleasure to read. In their pages one is not troubled by notable unworthiness of theme, crudeness of plan, imperfection of development, irregularity of thought, infelicity of expression. All parts combine to give a high and true literary pleasure. The critic does not, to be sure, abdicate his function, or declare that the books of such writers are above praise. He prefers this to that, notes and discusses various characteristics of genius and product, and may even declare poem, tale, or large book a mistake or a failure. But the failure, in such a case, has to do with the grand design, not with its details; or perhaps the declaration of failure, means only that creator and critic hold radically different opinions on the subject in question. Of the substantial unity, completeness, natural beauty, and adequacy of the product, or perhaps of the author's whole genius, in its parts and in its entirety, there need arise no troublesome question. Thus, in considering the writings of Dante, one may prefer the "Divine Comedy," another the "New Life;" or, in reading the

Literary artists of the beautiful.

longer work alone, one may best like the "Inferno," another the "Purgatorio," and still a third the "Paradiso." To the stern Protestant lover of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," Dante's mediæval Romanism may appear an ineradicable blemish; while to the ultramontane Romanist, on the other hand, his frank treatment of certain popes and saints may seem sad liberalism. The canto or the line may be declared indefensibly poor or unspeakably glorious; in a word, the Dante critic may ply his trade with the affectionate zeal of a Longfellow, or with the mathematical letter-counting minuteness of a Dryasdust. But whatever be the standpoint or method, there is still in Dante something that makes him a poet of joy and delight, or of sadness and sorrow that in themselves have an element of poetic pleasure. His work, when we study it, takes us out of the humdrum world, or bathes that world in the new light and fragrance of genius, so that its earthliness, its men and women, its thought and life, its very atmosphere, seem real and yet ideal, familiar but all above the commonplace. In very truth there is in the literature of genius a breath of the New Life which Dante entered under the guidance of love.

Between Dante and Hawthorne there is no need to draw a long comparison. The sad-faced dweller in the land of shades forth-fared six centuries ago, while our Yankee romancer is remembered by many not yet past middle life. One wrote verse, the other prose; Dante and Hawthorne.

one peered into the unseen for his august theme; the other found his subjects in the Massachusetts soil at his feet. The sadness of Dante was not so often irradiated with cheer as was the serious purpose of Hawthorne—a purpose sometimes mistaken for morbidness or gloom of personal character. Nor, finally, would any wise critic aver that Hawthorne, though clearly enough the greatest author yet produced in America, is to go down the centuries secure of any fame akin to Dante's. And yet there are some characteristics, absolute and relative, which both men had ; and it will be enough for my present purpose it it be admitted that Hawthorne's literary creations are things of genius, and that in reading them we turn to a region in which study becomes a pleasure rather than a duty. It would be a sorry day for criticism if it never found a book or poem—or in a broad sense a whole body of writings—to which it could say, as to a flower or a shell :

> "Being everything which now thou art
> Be nothing which thou art not."

Thus gladly we turn toward the singularly beautiful and characteristic list of writings which began with "Fanshawe" in 1828 and closed with the unfinished "Dolliver Romance" in 1864. Throughout nearly all of them we shall find that artlessness which characterizes the true genius, and that art which shows genius to be accompanied by high powers of construction and elab-

oration. An English painter and poet of Hawthorne's own time wrote, in youth, a story which has for its central thought the idea that "an artist need not seek for intellectualized moral intentions in his work, but will fulfil God's highest purpose by simple truth in manifesting, in a spirit of devout faith, the gift that God has given him."* This idea is one which, in some shape, often occurs to Hawthorne's readers, and must more often have been in the romancer's own mind, though he seldom formulated it. "Hand and Soul."

The delight which we take in Hawthorne is, then, the joy of perception of the work of an artist. The several methods of intellectual communication between mind and mind are widely variant in method and result. We derive one impression or pleasure from painting, and another—now stronger, now weaker, from sculpture, architecture, action, music; or from the apprehension of inanimate nature by the sense. It is the privilege and power of literature, in the hands of its masters to convey to readers a sort of combination or intense suggestion of almost all other methods of thought-transfer or soul-expression. If printing is the "art preservative of all arts," literature is the art suggestive or inclusive of all arts. The author is an artist, and in direct proportion as he fulfils the highest artistic function in choice and elaboration of his creations, does he deserve his craft-name in its highest sense. The authors who are, by right, Literature as art.

* Edward Dowden, in *The Academy*, Feb. 5, 1887.

nearest of kin to Michael Angelo, Raphael, Beethoven, are those that select some theme from the manifold life of the universe in which we exist, and develop it into a literary form best worthy of comparison, for ideal merit and poetic impression, with the statue of Moses, the Sistine Madonna, or the Eighth Symphony. Usually, the poet and prose romancer most attain success in the development of such literary form; and hence the highest literature of a world or a land, of all times or of any one time, is that of poetry and fiction. The spiritual and physical worlds, the ego and the non-ego, lie peculiarly open to the singer and the story-teller. Our libraries are crammed with the trash of verse and the rubbish of invented story; but now and then their shelves are brightened with a book, in either division, that gives the joy we get from a noble strain or a radiant picture.

Hawthorne as artist.

The precise success which Hawthorne has attained, in his artist-work, is a matter of debate, which it is hopeless to try to settle definitely as yet. The neglect which once surrounded his name has changed to a too silly and reverential laudation. Already this modest writer has fallen into the hands of the zealots who study plays or poems of Shakespeare or Shelley or Browning for "inner meanings" or esoteric doctrine. There can no longer be question, however, that Hawthorne is an artist, to be measured by the canons applicable to the broader and more ambitious creations, and to

stand or fall in letters according as his writings endure the large tests which they are brought to face.

Often enough did Hawthorne express his knowledge of the tremendous lesson which life teaches to a great artist like a Dante or a Milton, but cannot teach to a Schopenhauer or an Omar Khayyám. Bunyan never insisted more strongly upon the notion of God, duty, and immortality; upon the "sinfulness of sin," as the old preachers used to phrase it, and as the liberal romancer in reality accepted it. The human heart was Hawthorne's highest and most constant theme, and though he never wasted time in orotund sermonizing, and threw away as chaff fit for "Earth's Holocaust" much that creed-makers, from Nice to Plymouth, deem sacred, he was ever, without being less an artist, a force in the world of life and letters. He watched with keen, deep eyes, but sometimes he wrote with a pen of flame. "The heart, the heart,—there was the little yet boundless sphere wherein existed the original wrong of which the crime and misery of this outward world were merely types. Purify that inward sphere, and the many shapes of evil that haunt the outward, and which now seem almost our only realities, will turn to shadowy phantoms and vanish of their own accord; but if we go no deeper than the intellect, and strive, with merely that feeble instrument, to discern and rectify what is wrong, our whole accomplishment will be a dream." *

The romancer of the human heart.

* "Earth's Holocaust," in "Mosses from an Old Manse."

This "inward sphere," the human heart, was Hawthorne's field of study and portrayal. He saw and described its innocence, its purity, its loveliness, its noble hopes, its truest triumphs, its temptations, its sinful tendency, its desperate struggles, its downward motions, its malignity, its "total depravity," at least in appearance, its final petrifaction and self-destruction—the only destruction of which, in the divine plan, it is capable. Life, in Hawthorne's view, was no Human Comedy, as to Balzac, or tragedy of lost souls, as to the early New England theologians, but the struggle of individual men, women, and children with the powers within and without them, and chiefly the powers within. Surely a romancer could have no higher theme, and highly did Hawthorne treat it.

But did he thereby become the less an artist or the more?

The literature of the two great Anglo-Saxon peoples has always had a tolerably clear idea that there is a necessary connection between art and ethics. It has contained many mischievous or frivolous books; it has wavered between the austerity of Bunyan and the license of the dramatists of the Restoration; it has been successively influenced by Norman-French, Italian, Latin, and Greek culture; but it has never lost sight of certain principles peculiarily its own. One of these principles is that a book should have a definite purpose, a real reason for being, if it expects a long life. This principle has not been

Art and ethics.

lost even in the imaginative literature of England and America.

Before the novel, the poem afforded our intellectual ancestors their means of amusement; and in early English poetry the moral element was seldom lacking. The Anglo-Saxons found in the verse ascribed to Cædmon, in the paraphrase of Judith, and even in the non-Christian story of "Beowulf," stern expressions of the inevitableness of retribution and penalty. Like Miles Standish, they liked Old Testament wars better than New Testament peace, but their scanty literature was prized largely for its moral lessons. Later, in Robert of Gloucester's "Chronicle," in the grim and telling force of the satire in "Piers Plowman," and in the "Canterbury Tales," English readers amused themselves while they were getting advice, warning, and entreaty. "Piers Plowman," with its sharp distinctions between righteousness and hypocrisy, and the "Canterbury Tales," with their lifelike pictures of all classes of Englishmen, were in a true sense precursors of the English Reformation. They were novels in verse, but they were something more. Even the "Faerie Queene," with its cumbrous supernatural machinery, never let imagination hide the "XII. Morall Vertues." It was an Italian graft on the tough old English tree.

When fiction took the place of poetry, as an intellectual amusement, the same principle held good. To this day, the best-known work of imagination in English prose is a terribly earnest

sermon. It so happened that the growth of the English novel began when English society and religion were once more in a degraded state, but in the indecency and coarseness of the novel of the eighteenth century there still appears something that is not French, not Italian, not Spanish. Robinson Crusoe is a moral Englishman abroad, who has changed his sky, not his disposition. Moralizing, if not morality, is not absent from the loose sayings of Sterne. Swift, in his malignant, half-insane way, at least had reforms in view. Fielding, like Chaucer and the author of "Piers Plowman," felt that accurate delineation was the precursor of a change for the better. Goldsmith's pictures of virtuous rural life are still beloved because, in Taine's phrase, the chief of them "unites and harmonizes in one character the best features of the manners and morals of the time and country, and creates an admiration and love for pious and orderly, domestic and disciplined, laborious and rural life; Protestant and English virtue has not a more approved and amiable exemplar." Samuel Richardson, the precursor of the long-regnant school of sentimental novelists, spent his literary lifetime in trying to show that integrity and uprightness, even of the Grandisonian order, are more attractive than the vice of the "town" in the era of the Georges.

Moral law in English fiction.

Something more than mere amusement, something behind the story, is still more evident in Scott, the Scheherezade of modern literature; in Dickens, promoting humanity and good fellow-

ship, and attacking abuses in prisons, schools, law courts, and home-life; in Thackeray, tilting loyally against social shams; in saddened but brave Charlotte and Emily Brontë, amid the Yorkshire moors; in George Eliot, describing the Jew as she believed him to be in reality, doing justice to the stern righteousness of a Dinah Morris, or telling how Savonarola was a Protestant in spite of himself. Turning to America, we note, as in England, the almost total disappearance of the outward immorality which defiled British fiction a hundred years ago, and which still disgraces a part of French fiction: and more than this, we find positive qualities, and a belief that story-telling is something more than story-telling. Irving feels with the heart of humanity; Cooper, like Scott, magnifies the chivalric virtues, under new skies; and Hawthorne goes to the depth of the soul in his search for the basal principles of human action.

What does all this mean? Is a book great because its moral purpose is sound, or is all literature bad as art and literature if it lacks the righteous purpose? Not at all; neither has Anglo-Saxon literature monopoly of righteousness and purpose. It means that this literature has insisted more strongly than others upon the necessary connection between art *and* ethics; that it has never prized a profitless, soulless beauty; and that, so long as the world can be made better by literature, book-makers can and ought to help. Between two books of equal

An inevitable race-principle.

literary merit, but of unequal purpose, it gives greater and more lasting favor to the more useful book. It believes, with the American poet who is usually considered our chief apostle of the merely beautiful, that "taste holds intimate relations with the intellect and the moral sense." Whether it is right or wrong in this general idea, it is certain that any change in it, whether wrought by believers in "art for art's sake," by pseudo Greek poets, by "cosmic" bards who sometimes confuse right and wrong, or by strictly "realistic" novelists, will change a principle in accord with which the race has acted for ten centuries.

In accord with that principle Nathaniel Hawthorne worked from the beginning to the end of his literary life; but he was too great an artist to confuse for a moment the demands of ethics with those of pure art. With this explicit statement at the outset I shall not need to recur again, by the use of the word *ethical*, to this fundamental element in the greatness of Hawthorne's work, save as it may incidentally appear.

Hawthorne's foundation.

Because of his general theme—the heart of man—and the necessary and artistic elaboration of a theme stained with evil, many careless readers and a few superficial critics have been wont to declare Hawthorne morbid, gloomy, fond of repulsive spiritual analysis of depraved or debased characters, or at best a dweller on the "night-side of

Was Hawthorne "morbid"?

nature." Even Emerson made a misleading half-statement when he said that Hawthorne "rode well his steed of the night,"—as though he had been a Poe or a Hoffman. Hawthorne was not a graveyard ghoul, a specialist in morbid psychology, a black-sheeted monk of the order that officiates only at funerals. A careful reading of one of his books—or of the biography of "Nathaniel Hawthorne and his Wife," by their son Julian—is enough to dispel the error, which strangely lingers here and there. Hawthorne dealt with the profoundest themes of human life and thought; he saw the mind within the body, and the soul within the mind. The deep and lasting consequences of sin, and that most awful of punishments, the self-slaughter of a soul, he studied and portrayed in more than one of his stories. If "morbid psychology" mean the examination and description of temptation, evil, and the result, then morbid psychology is an element in Hawthorne's books. But he never describes evil for the mere pleasure of description; still less with any pessimistic motive. He delves

> "Down, mid the tangled roots of things,
> That coil about the central fire,"

in order to see how they

> "Climb to a soul in grass and flowers."

Sin is never disconnected from penalty, and penalty is applied for the purification of some imaginary character, or virtually of that very real

character, the individual reader of the story. Hawthorne is never morbid in the sense in which the term is sometimes applicable to Tourguéneff or certain French novelists of general renown, or to Edgar Poe. He does not approach a gloomy theme for the purpose of making a sensation, or producing a gruesome effect, or evoking a brilliant artistic result. Life, in his view, was the most august of themes; and he saw it in its entirety, in its gradations from Roger Chillingworth to little Pearl. When he chose he could create things as evanescent and merely beautiful as a butterfly or a sunlit bubble; but when he passed into the shadow it was for serious portrayals. So far was Hawthorne from being an unwholesome soul that not even his classmate and friend Longfellow was more truly a gentle optimist and lover of existence. His home-life and personal character have been made known to all the world, and rarely has been displayed such a picture of fresh beauty, and serene sunlight, and self-respecting "acceptance of the universe," spiritual and natural. Indeed, his own words to his sister-in-law Elizabeth Peabody are enough: "When I write anything that I know or suspect is morbid, I feel as though I had told a lie."

The extremes in Hawthorne's universe.

Hawthorne had the soul and the outlook of a poet. In his story "The Great Stone Face" he says: "The world assumed another and a better aspect from the hour that the poet blessed it with his happy eyes. The Creator had bestowed him, as

the last best touch to his own handiwork. Creation was not finished till the poet came to interpret, and so complete it." According to this definition, which the writer, of course, had no thought of applying to himself, Hawthorne did bless the world with happy eyes, interpret and complete creation. To him the universe was a lovely thing of perennial beauty, to be enjoyed and valued for its own sake, and for the pleasure of mere existence. This was no lost world, for religious and irreligious pessimists and agnostics to practise their wits on, but a veritable earthly paradise. "There is no decay. Each human soul is the first-created inhabitant of its own Eden. We dwell in an old moss-covered mansion, and tread in the worn footprints of the past, and have a gray clergyman's ghost for our daily and nightly inmate; yet all these outward circumstances are made less than visionary by the renewing power of the spirit. Should the spirit ever lose this power,—should the withered leaves, and the rotten branches, and the moss-covered house, and the ghost of the gray past ever become its realities, and the verdure and the freshness merely its faint dream,—then let it pray to be released from earth."* Hawthorne's "New Adam and Eve" light-heartedly "tread along the winding paths among marble pillars, mimic temples, urns, obelisks, and sarcophagi, sometimes pausing to contemplate these fantasies of human growth, and sometimes to admire the flowers wherewith

* "Buds and Bird-Voices," "Mosses from an Old Manse," Vol. I.

nature converts decay to loveliness." Mere beauty, joy, happiness, to be followed instinctively, are at one side, and that the greater side, of Hawthorne's universe. Toward these all things ultimately ought to tend. At the other extreme from this heaven is the hell he so often described, and which he portrayed in thirty words when he told us, in one of his note books, that "at the last day—when we see ourselves as we are—man's only inexorable judge will be himself, and the punishment of his sins will be the perception of them." To and fro men pass, now hither, now thither, into the shadow or into the sun, and Hawthorne follows them with the serene eyes of a regretful or joyous observer and chronicler, but not with the feelings of the embittered or morbid spectator in the search of mere literary material for woeful romance.

Attitude in the sentimental era.

Hawthorne never shared, and indeed must have despised, the silly and sickly sentimentalism of the period in which his literary life began. It was the time—at least in verse and in fiction—of bowers, and casements, and tresses, and wafting breezes, and tears, and sighs; when Vice had horns and a tail and a sulphurous breath, and when sugary Virtue, on the other hand, was equally impossible and almost equally repulsive. Hawthorne was as far from prudery as he was from baseness. His soul was a wholesome one, and it was a soul not content with superficiality, whether of the good or of the bad things in life. As an author, his sunshine

was brighter and his shadows darker than those of most novelists, for they were the sunshine and shadows of real life, and not of a pallid or utopian picture. When the heroines of other story-tellers were bursting into tears every page or two, Hawthorne's Hester Prynne was walking in the loneliness and silence of majestic sorrow and voiceless remorse. When the guitars of the pseudo-Spanish heroines of the day were tinkling from the lattices portrayed in the steel-engravings then so popular, his Phœbe Pyncheon was showing American readers the fresh and lovely grace of a true little Massachusetts maiden of the Puritan stock. Other novelists of his native land went hunting all afield for types, and plots, and backgrounds; Hawthorne took those amid which he had grown up, and which he had studied as deeply and quietly as Thoreau studied the depths of Walden Pond, or the depths of the sky above. His world was the world of his place and time, but its light and air were those which surround all humanity. From one he learned all; in his way he unconsciously heeded that advice of Emerson's, which was found among the philosopher's manuscripts: he told men what they knew before, he painted the prospect from their door. Men had known more than they could express, and more than they had read in other books; so Hawthorne reaped the reward of the imaginative genius who states or portrays what others have but felt. As a large literary creator, accordingly, no other American occupies a place

Hawthorne's outlook.

so high, and no other is so worthy of mention in the study of the world's best literature.

The writings of Hawthorne are, as a whole, of such uniform merit that it is not easy to select illustrative specimens of characteristic significance, as far as thought or literary style is concerned. Though he exercised an unusual freedom in the use of new or unfamiliar phrases, and in coining words, the charm of expression is seldom absent from his later writings, and often appears even in his earliest. It is more important to note that the broad general method of all his books is likewise a method showing few variations between 1828, with its crude little romance of Bowdoin, and 1864, with its unfinished "Aladdin's tower" of the author's fiction. Hawthorne's just judgment of his own genius and powers of expression—a judgment illustrated in his long self-imposed novitiate, and strengthened thereby —enabled him to think and write with unusual freedom from the ill effects of fashion, greed, or prejudice. In this respect he resembled Emerson, from whom he differed widely in most of his mental characteristics. But I believe that it is possible to select from his works one short tale which is a microcosm of his mind and art. From the patient study of such a story as that of "Ethan Brand," in the volume entitled "The Snow-Image, and Other Twice-Told Tales" (1851), may be derived a deeper and more comprehensive knowledge of his true literary life than from any voluminous record of dates, doings, and

titles. It contains a picture of the soul and body of the author's work, and may well be taken in hand as the alpha of Hawthorne's alphabet, by those—if such there be—as yet unfamiliar with his method and expression as an author, or by those who have read him merely in a superficial way, without noting the deeper elements in the several stories and romances. Hawthorne's whole philosophy of life, and his point of view, may here be noted and studied within the compass of no more than twenty-two pages. This "chapter from an abortive romance," as the author modestly terms it in the sub-title, is in reality so rounded and complete that it needs no apology, but rather a duly thoughtful attention. Of it Mrs. Hawthorne wrote to her mother in December, 1848: "It is a tremendous truth, written, as he often writes truth, with characters of fire, upon an infinite gloom,—softened so as not wholly to terrify, by divine touches of beauty, —revealing pictures of nature, and also the tender spirit of a child." *

Philosophy of life.

Hawthorne was a pioneer and master of that literary method which, under the name of realism, has so strongly affected the fiction of the latter part of the nineteenth century. He studied minutely, and portrayed with delicate faithfulness, the smallest flower beneath his foot, the faintest bird in the distant sky, the trivial mark or the seemingly unimportant act of the person described. The microscopic

Hawthorne a realist and an idealist.

* Nathaniel Hawthorne and his Wife," by Julian Hawthorne; 1, 330–331.

artist was not more faithful in noting little characteristics or swiftly-fleeting marks. Such sketches as "A Rill from the Town Pump," "Main Street," "Sights from a Steeple," or "Little Annie's Ramble" are realism in its complete estate. Tourguéneff himself, the prototype of so many followers in Russia, France, and America, is not more watchful with the eye or more painstaking with the pen. But between Hawthorne and Tourguéneff there is an unlikeness as marked as their external similarity of method. Hawthorne, a realist in portrayal, is a thorough idealist in thought and purpose. The weariness and melancholy of Russian life and literature are nowhere present in his writings. Tourguéneff's exquisite "Poems in Prose" virtually end with the query of that weakly pessimistic song the burden of which is: "What is it all when all is done?" "In Hawthorne's books, to be sure, are the profoundest sin, the deepest veil of misery and mystery, the infinite gloom of which Mrs. Hawthorne wrote; but always above them the tremendous truth written with characters of fire, and yet with "divine touches of beauty," with many a picture of artlessly lovely nature and life, and with the tender spirit of a child pervading the whole. At the close of Tourguéneff's portrayals silently falls the black impenetrable curtain through which we may not peer, behind which there is nothing. But in Hawthorne's pages, beyond the blackness and woe of sin and of slow spiritual suicide, are the glow and the glory of the triumph that fol-

lows the struggle; of the proved virtue that is better than untried innocence, and of the eternity that tells the meaning of time.

The method of elaboration of the idea of "Ethan Brand" is definite. The plot of the story seems simplicity itself. It is Hawthorne's usual plan to take a single thought and develop it by the aid of an uncomplicated machinery. Here, as in so many other cases, he introduces few characters, and describes no more than one or two scenes, at the same time contriving to suggest leagues of wandering and years of passing time. In one of his earlier walks in Berkshire County, Massachusetts, Hawthorne had come upon a lime-kiln, luridly and picturesquely burning against the sky of night; and in his note-book for 1838 is recorded, at some length, its appearance in the mind of the watchful young romancer. From the memory of this lime-kiln gradually grew the story of Ethan Brand, the man with the heart of stone. Around its central character are grouped the lime-burner Bartram, rough but not unkindly; his little son, with the innocent curiosity of childhood, pure amid grime and dirt; the motley group of village worthies: the bibulous and broken-down lawyer, the coarse doctor of the period when brutality was deemed requisite in the practice of medicine, the withered village wit, and the poor old white-haired man, whose daughter and whose mind had been stolen away by the evil Ethan. As though these were not enough to heighten the

A Hawthorne microcosm: the story of "Ethan Brand."

tragedy of the story, by their more superficial and yet equally miserable badness, we have also, against the solemn background of the hills, a German Jew with his little diorama of the wonders of all the distant world, and his solemn-foolish old dog. Behind them all, in the aloofness of blacker and more deliberate sin, is Ethan Brand, who returns from a world-search for selfish intellectual triumph, to find the Unpardonable Sin in his own breast. Tenderness, sympathy, and love he had deliberately crushed down; the mind he had made everything, the heart nothing, and thus he had become a fiend. The ablest theologians who have speculated upon the nature of that "sin against the Holy Ghost," which shall be forgiven neither in this world nor in the world to come, have concluded that it consists of a persistent barring-out of good influences and good desires. As long as the soul is free, such a barring-out of good must be effectual, and cannot be mitigated until the soul rights itself of its own motion. It may, indeed, notwithstanding the love of the Divine for the creature, go so far that here or hereafter the very heart becomes stony and bloodless. This is the lesson of "Ethan Brand," stated more powerfully than ever a theologian stated it. Hawthorne's creed is as universal as the needs of man; he has no theological axe to grind, wherewith to behead dissentient heretics; he is a literary artist, not a professional sermonizer; and certainly he is above the accusation of the Pharisaic egotism of those who think the

Deity under obligation to manage the world according to the scheme of their sect. But the eternal and apparently inexorable truths of the moral universe he knew and believed as truly as he knew and believed the supernal beauty of creation and the yearning love of a Creator who stands ready to forgive whenever a soul turns to him.

The universe of morals.

On a single page at the close of this story is the contrast between the two phases of truth. Ethan Brand has cast himself into the kiln, and on the calcined dust lies his snow-white skeleton, within the ribs of which is the marble shape of a human heart. But little Joe skips happily about, and cries: "Dear father, that strange man is gone, and the sky and the mountains all seem glad of it!" And meanwhile the serenity and loveliness of the world are portrayed with that dainty touch which suggests, not argues, in the picture of the surrounding landscape:

The stony heart.

> The early sunshine was already pouring its gold upon the mountain-tops; and though the valleys were still in shadow they smiled cheerfully in the promise of the bright day that was hastening onward. The village, completely shut in by hills, which swelled away gently about it, looked as if it had rested peacefully in the hollow of the great hand of Providence. Every dwelling was distinctly visible; the little spires of the two churches pointed upwards, and caught a fore-glimmering of brightness from the sun-gilt skies upon their gilded weathercocks. . . . . Old Graylock was glorified with a golden cloud upon his head. Scattered likewise over the breasts of the surrounding mountains, there were heaps of hoary mist, in fantastic shapes, some of them far down into the valley, others high up towards the summits, and still others, of the same family of

mist or cloud, hovering in the gold radiance of the upper atmosphere. Stepping from one to another of the clouds that rested on the hills, and thence to the loftier brotherhood that sailed in air, it seemed almost as if a mortal man might thus ascend into the heavenly regions. Earth was so mingled with sky that it was a day-dream to look at it.

"The Threefold Destiny."

This idea of the homeward-coming of a world-wanderer was used by Hawthorne in another of his significant stories, "The Threefold Destiny," in "Twice-told Tales." This "Threefold Destiny" is really the counterpart of "Ethan Brand," though we have no indication that the author designed the two to bear a complementary relation. The art of "The Threefold Destiny," though not of the highest, has been so obvious that the story has won considerable favor in France, where literary form is so generally demanded; yet spirit dominates style, as in "Ethan Brand." But notwithstanding its apt title and its relative success as compared with some similar ambitious undertakings by other hands, "The Threefold Destiny," as a piece of literature, is decidedly inferior to "Ethan Brand," and cannot be considered one of Hawthorne's greater products. It illustrates his great general method, but not his highest achievement. The plot is suggestive. Cranfield, the central figure of the tale, wanders far from his village home, in search of world-wide fame and commanding station, a mysterious treasure, and an ideal love; he returns to teach the little school near at hand, to till the poor patch of ground on

which he was born, and to wed a childhood playmate. The application follows: "Would all, who cherish such wild wishes, but look around them, they would oftenest find their sphere of duty, of prosperity, and happiness within those precincts, and in that station where Providence has cast their lot. Happy they who read the riddle, without a weary world-search, or a lifetime spent in vain."

In this story we perceive the ill effects which often attend an attempted union between the didactic and the artistic. It must definitely be recognized and stated that in "The Threefold Destiny" the decoration and construction suffer at the hands of the ethical purpose. The moral is somewhat rudely thrown in the reader's face at the close. We asked for a story, and we got a "Sunday-school book" instead. Hawthorne, for once, seems like a professional or salaried moralizer; and we feel a little inclined, in this instance, to read what he has to say, and then go and follow our own will, though it take us to the end of the earth instead of to our mother's kitchen-garden or the village school. What is natural in Miss Edgeworth seems foreign in Hawthorne, whose usual delicacy of touch and suggestiveness of style apparently desert him at the climax. This semi-clerical manner is here not coincident with any proper success in ideal fiction. The reader is half ready at the close, to rise for the benediction, when the "application" and the "aspiration" have been duly uttered. But the

central idea of the story remains significant. It is closely united to Hawthorne's usual method, in which he seldom made failures. It is no easy task to be uniformly spiritual and uniformly artistic, but Hawthorne very nearly achieved this task. We can more readily forgive him for a comparatively poor story, now and then, than for any repeated infidelity to a method at once spontaneous and high, in which he won a success not achieved by any other English-speaking novelist of the century. His deliberate choice of his place in literature was made in full recognition of his powers and preference, as well as of the universal relation between external artistic creation and its guiding purpose within. The literary centuries are strewn with failures in attempts like his; "The Threefold Destiny"—by no means an outright failure—merely reminds us that its author was fallible, and heightens his general success by the passing shade of an occasional unworthiness.

In the previous volume of this history I incidentally mentioned three of Hawthorne's short stories, including the two just considered, as those in which the student could at length perceive the firm purpose underlying the enduring art. The third member of this trilogy—of my choice, not of the author's arrangement—is "Lady Eleanore's Mantle," one of the "Legends of the Province House," in the second volume of "Twice-Told Tales." Turning thereto, the reader finds a plan essentially similar, in broad conception, to those of the other allegories,

"Lady Eleanore's Mantle."

but expressed in an art so admirable as almost to tempt one to use the adjective perfect. In such a story as this Hawthorne appears at his best. The sombre background of early Puritan Massachusetts; the Boston of the days when grim democratic Calvinism struggled with the considerable grandeur of wealth and a provincial court; a few strangely-romantic characters standing plainly against the horizon of the familiar sky, yet seen through the dimmed light of the intervening years that so completely separate the old from the new—all these things Hawthorne could use far more powerfully than any other American.

Hawthorne's background.

Some critics have lamented that Hawthorne, so equipped with the strength and weapons of a genius, lacked the historic background which a great romancer should enjoy. They have actually apologized for the poverty of the materials which he was forced to use. On the contrary, it seems to me that he found at hand scenes possessing remarkable capabilities for literary treatment; strong and forceful characters never before portrayed; and (because of the vast changes caused by the Revolution) a sufficient remoteness of time. Castles, drawbridges, black forests, tournaments, battles, and knights and dames had been used so often that none but a Scott could longer make them interesting. But houses of seven gables; witch-haunted Puritan villages, fringed by native woods from which the Indians had scarcely fled; soul-conflicts of stern dogmatists; heart-sorrows of men and

women whose lives were forced back into their own selves; lovely little maidens from whom the poetry of nature could not be taken away; children as pure as the field-springs or half-hidden violets amid which they played, were unfamiliar in English fiction before Hawthorne. Irving in his Hudson stories, or Cooper in his Indian tales, was not more fortunate in theme nor more original in treatment; while Poe, the only other American novelist worth mentioning in a chapter devoted to Hawthorne, did not find Ghostland itself a better artistic background than Salem or Concord.

If it be an advantage for a novelist to follow other great workers in the same field, then Hawthorne lacked such advantage. But the great creator, whether he be novelist or poet, does not need prototypes and forerunners. He avails himself freely of the lessons and the work of his predecessors, but he is under no more than minor obligations to them. The man of genius is injured by following others, quite as truly as he is helped. A similar remark may be made concerning the picturesque or imposing historic background of literature. Such a background, in an ancient country, is pretty sure to be an unduly familiar one. A genius, in point of fact, takes his background where he finds it; if at home, and still comparatively unknown, he follows his national bent and local inspiration; if not, he forages all afield, without complaining of the disadvantages of his surroundings. When

Creator, not follower.

Hawthorne chose, he made solemn and august Rome his background; for the most part, however, he was glad to employ the singularly rich unused realm close at hand. It is the weaker novelist that is most concerned to find a fit setting for his plot; a mind like Hawthorne's possesses the element of large natural spontaneity which characterizes the world-author as distinct from the provincialist. A Dante is Italian, a Goethe is German, and even a Shakespeare is intensely English; but in their writings the local typifies the general. To the statement, then, that Hawthorne was imprisoned or disadvantaged by his environment, a double reply can be made: first, that he found at hand a rich and virgin field, well suited to the nature of his working genius; and second, that his powers of invention and assimilation were too great to be crushed down by adverse conditions, had such surrounded him. Indeed, Hawthorne was related to his background as closely as flower to root, so naturally did he grow from it and so truly did he represent it to the beholder's eye.

To return to "Lady Eleanore's Mantle": the story is vivid in its historic pictures, romantic in its plot, and adequate in its perception and portrayal of the emotions, which are the real theme of the highest fiction written during the present century. Its thought is the curse brought by a lovely but heartless woman, who wrapped herself in pride as in a mantle, and whose mantle literally became the source of pestilence to herself and to the

whole community. The episode, in other hands, might have been treated feebly or repulsively; its success might have been moral or perhaps sanitary rather than properly artistic; but in Hawthorne's pages the stately and the horrible, the external and the internal, are presented in a literary union of which the reader notes the admirable whole rather than the patiently wrought details. The work of the brain is concealed by the artist who is content to display the finished product; *ars est celare artem.* Hawthorne has indeed shown us, in his note-books, much of his mental habit and method of observation and elaboration; but in his completed work, here and elsewhere, the means seldom cloud the literary result. One might go still farther, and add that the style itself is so transparent that we instantly note the thought and afterward—if at all—the expression.

Hawthorne's romances.

The powers of Hawthorne, thus displayed in short stories, were made more broadly and largely, though not more truly, manifest in his romances. It often happens that a good writer of short stories is unable to produce a praiseworthy novel or romance, while the creator of a meritorious novel cannot, or does not, represent his powers within a narrow space. The history of literature readily affords illustrations of this truth. We do not need to search beyond the brief period of American literature to prove it, for we were given no valuable novel or romance by the hand of Irving or Poe, and no good short

story by that of Cooper. Hawthorne, however, having won a true and high (though not widely apparent) place as a story-writer, produced his first romance in middle life, and thereafter achieved his broadest fame as the author of "The Scarlet Letter," "The House of the Seven Gables," "The Blithedale Romance," and "The Marble Faun," rather than "Twice-Told Tales" or "Mosses from an Old Manse." Notwithstanding the obvious merits of "The House of the Seven Gables" and "The Blithedale Romance," it is evident that "The Scarlet Letter" and "The Marble Faun" are conceived in a nobler manner. The first of the two, in important particulars, is the greatest book Hawthorne ever wrote, though comparison between it and some of his other writings—even with the best of the short stories—is neither easy nor valuable in its results. To label books or pictures or musical compositions in order of merit is not an undertaking to be followed uniformly, nor does it invariably illuminate the study of the productions in question. Whatever be the estimate of the relative rank of those rounded romances, it is evident that the merit of the work of the author of "Ethan Brand" increased in proportion to his breadth of scope—in availing himself of which, of course, he avoided unwisdom in the relations of plot to length, and of his subject to his known powers. At first, I admit, a contemporary critic would hardly have prophesied success for Hawthorne's later books, which now seem the greater in both

senses of the adjective. That their success was won was due to the fact of Hawthorne's comprehensive *humanity*,—to his outreaching human tenderness as truly as to his dramatic observation and art.

Hawthorne's humanity.

In "Our Old Home" Hawthorne tells us of a visit paid by several persons of his party to an English workhouse. A wretched child, the offspring of utter degradation and the representative of generations of depravity, insisted upon attaching itself to a gentleman of the party. Its miserable little body was but a living mass of repulsiveness, but its dim eyes, bleared even in infancy, recognized in the kindly man an affection of which it demanded an outward expression. The man was singularly repelled by the physically horrible, but he mastered his prejudice and gave the child the love it craved, taking it up and caressing it as tenderly as if he had been its father. As we read the closing sentence of the description we do not find it hard to think of the general purpose of the series of books beginning with "Fanshawe" and ending with "The Dolliver Romance": "No doubt the child's mission in reference to our friend was to remind him that he was responsible, in his degree, for all the sufferings and misdemeanors of the world in which he lived, and was not entitled to look upon a particle of its dark calamity as if it were none of his concern: the offspring of a brother's iniquity being his own blood-relation, and the guilt, likewise, a burden on him, unless he

expiated it by better deeds." Years after this friend's body was laid in the grave, we were told that his earthly name was Nathaniel Hawthorne.

I connect this story with a strictly literary criticism because Hawthorne's humanity was the basis of his success as the romancer of the human heart. As tenderly sympathetic as Irving, he possessed a strength of stroke that Irving lacked. As original a creator as Cooper, he measured his own powers with a justice in significant contrast with Cooper's grotesque misapprehension of himself. As true an artist as Poe, his heart and head so combined as to lead him to life itself, and not to the shadowed land between life and death. Therefore Hawthorne, and not Irving, Cooper, or Poe, is the chief writer of fiction yet produced in America.

Thus far have I proceeded without more than incidental reference to the chronology of Hawthorne's career because it seems to me that the art-product, in this instance, demands attention before the man; not only because it is his permanent literary legacy, self-contained and self-explanatory, but because it illuminates the whole story of his personal life. On the foundation thus laid, our study of his career may now turn somewhat more definitely to his sixty years, with their literary gifts to the world of readers.

Hawthorne was born in a plain old house, not over-large, in what is now a by-street of Salem, Massachusetts. The city of Salem, near enough

to Boston to share some part of its life, is yet so far removed as to be able to follow an independent existence of its own, preserving, with a tenacity which a mere suburb must lose, those peculiar characteristics which it has retained without essential alteration for two centuries and a half. English intelligence, here transplanted in sea-coast soil, has long dominated a society perhaps peculiarly courtly, and certainly rich in that gentle blood and thoughtful brain and which constitute the proper American aristocracy. The old seaport, in 1804, could boast of money, of spoils of extensive commerce, and families prominent because of downright ability. Hawthorne's personal career in Salem, by an experience not unusual, was hardly so agreeable to himself or to his fellow-citizens as it would have been had he followed the pursuits of a merchant, an attorney, or even a village politician. The man of genius, if he be a story-teller or poet, naturally puts the characteristics of his fellows into his books; and his fellows as naturally fail to be flattered by portraits not wholly painted in rose-tints. Local and family prejudices are the passions of human nature first to be roused and last to be quelled—whether Puritan in Massachusetts or Creole in Louisiana; and so Hawthorne had very definitely found when he pleasurably deserted his ancestral streets to tread less sensitive soil. Now, however, these difficulties are already ancient; Salem is proud of the birth of the

Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1804–1864.

Hawthorne's Salem.

greatest of our romancers; and in its graciously conservative shades are shown many of his homes and haunts, around which not a few myths have already gathered. The beautiful old city has the very atmosphere, to-day, which was the vital breath of Hawthorne's books; and though it shows that unsymmetrical combination of raw green-and-white and weather-beaten age which are so sharply contrasted in the highly American but characteristically provincial regions of eastern Massachusetts, the prevalent impression is that of colonial venerableness. Wooden buildings in a salty air grow old quickly, hence Salem, like Nantucket or lower Newport, already seems as restful as some European towns of a fourfold age. As one stands before the birthplace of Hawthorne he seems to see the characteristic New England boy, whose father followed the sea from out the harbor of a rich commercial town; whose mother's ancestral line was Massachusetts-Saxon; and whose own strong frame and brain were nourished by the skies and woods, fruits and streams, traditions and books of that strip of coast-land between the Penobscot and the Hudson, where, for two centuries and a half, average comfort and average intelligence have been greater than in any other spot on the globe.

Upon this seaside strip all Hawthorne's American life was spent, save a little period of rather homesick residence at Lenox, among the Berkshire hills of western Massachusetts. In his college days at Bowdoin, the Brunswick

At Bowdoin College.

air was fragrant with the pine-needles and the neighboring sea-coves of "hundred harbored Maine." That famous institution of learning, in its early days, was but poorly equipped with books, halls, and museums, but it had teachers who taught and students who studied—the things most needed in hedge-school or university. The gracious culture of some homes in the older towns of the new state, and of its mother Massachusetts, was at least represented in the class-lists; and Hawthorne, while "wasting time" in the fashion so common among under-graduates of bookish or scribbling tastes, was acquiring—absorbing—a literary style and its informing spirit—which very likely would have come to him anywhere, but certainly distinguished his college days.

In his old age that beloved instructor at Bowdoin, Professor Alpheus S. Packard, whose career was almost synchronous with that of the institution to whose loyal service his lifetime was devoted, wrote at my request his recollections of the eminent men who had sat before him in the class-rooms. The clearly written manuscript lies before me; and from it I transfer his vivid though brief reminiscences of the greatest of that remarkable group of celebrities whose undergraduate days were spent at Brunswick in the decade between 1820 and 1830:

"The College Triennial not unfrequently fails to denote, in its classical fashion, real celebrities of a class, because their names have not had appended what some may regard as the cabala

of academic bodies, the 'semilunar fardels' as the eminent Dr. Cox wittily styled them, or other mystic initials indicating honors, the reward of eminence, or compliments, sometimes forsooth bought at a price. Our own class of 1825 has in its roll the name of 'Nathaniel Hawthorne, Mr.,' all the catalogue shows of a name that does its full share to make that class memorable in college annals.

"The visitor at Salem, Mass., is shown with pride the dwelling in the lower part of the town where Hawthorne first saw the light. His family came from England and settled in Salem early in the last century. The men followed the sea; and his father, a ship-master, died of yellow fever in Cuba when the son was but a child. His mother was said to be of great beauty and extreme sensibility. At the age of ten the boy, on account of his health, was sent to live on a farm on the borders of Lake Sebago, Maine, and at the proper age was sent back to Salem to complete his fitting for college. The writer's memory pictures him distinctly as he sat in the Latin and Greek recitation room, a dark-browed youth, with black, drooping, full, inquisitive eyes; a full head of dark hair; a gentle, grave, low, yet musical voice;—shy as a maiden; always rendering his passages tastefully; writing his Latin exercise with facility, and idiomatically. His English themes were complimented by the professor in charge, Prof. Newman, whose compliments were worth having. He was more a reader than a scholar on

the merit roll. I cannot do better than to quote the picture of him by the pen of a classmate, J. S. C. Abbott, recognized, it is likely, by his contemporaries: 'Though singularly retiring in his habits, dwelling in unrevealed recesses which his most intimate friends were never permitted to penetrate, his winning countenance and gentle manners won esteem and even popularity. Though fond of being present at festal scenes, he never told a story or sang a song. His voice was never heard in any shout of merriment; but the silent, beaming smile would testify to his keen appreciation of the scene and to his enjoyment of the wit. He would sit for a whole evening with head gently inclined to one side, hearing every word, seeing every gesture, and yet scarcely a word would pass his lips. But there was an indescribable something in the silent presence of Hawthorne which rendered him one of the most desired guests on such occasions. Jonathan Cilley was probably his most intimate friend in the class. And yet his discrimination would lead him to say: "I love Hawthorne, I admire him; but I do not know him. He lives in a mysterious world of thought and imagination which he never permits me to enter."' It was of Hawthorne's college days I was to write. His manner of life, and the sources and elements of his fame, are the common possession of the world of letters."

After graduation came that period of seclusion —rather of reclusion, if I may coin a word—in the maternal house at Salem. Seldom, in the

haste and waste of vigorous American life, has a great author entered the monastery of home, there to spend the years of strong young manhood in a novitiate preparatory to the sacred profession of letters. Notwithstanding the myth and legend that have grown up around this preparation-time—tales half true, half imaginary, of midnight walks and daily avoidance of the sunlight, of an invisible eccentric, whose face was hardly known to his sisters or his melancholy mother—the common-sense of Hawthorne, in the matter, was as actual as was his romance of life. He always shunned much that the world called existence, but never with utterly unwholesome idea or lastingly hurtful result. In this determination to read, think, and write for himself, in his own way, was a large and true sanity, fortunate for the world of letters. In vigorous health, of a strong and manly frame, he was pursuing, half-unconsciously, that graduate-study which some undertake in the professional school, others in the university. Years later, in "The Marble Faun," he wrote: "If I had an insupportable burden,—if, for any cause, I were bent upon sacrificing every earthly hope as a peace-offering toward heaven,—I would make the wide world my cell, and good deeds to mankind my prayer." Of the weak and bilious selfishness which, under the pretence of spiritual strength and special sanctity, or of high intellectuality and contempt for the *ignobile vulgus*, flies from the humanity so needful of help, Hawthorne was as ignorant in his hermit-cave at

Hawthorne as recluse.

Salem as he was later in his capacity of editor, custom-house officer, or consul. His subsequent work, and its deserved and unwavering fame, were based upon a self-control, a willingness to wait, by no means easily secured or maintained in a country where everything was to be done, and in a young literature to which the temptations of sensationalism and sentimentalism, though not of financial reward, were visible on every hand. Hawthorne, in the words of a sage critic, had "the conscientious fidelity of Puritanism in his veins, a thing equally important for literature and for life."* The conscientiousness was the cause of his smaller, more delicate, or realistic successes; the fidelity of his broader triumphs. Whittier once told the same critic that "when he himself had obtained, with some difficulty, in 1847, the insertion of one of Hawthorne's sketches in *The National Era*, the latter said quietly, 'There is not much market for my wares.'"† Thus patiently, in unruffled temper and quiet determination to do his best, Hawthorne worked on—writing, pruning, destroying. What the world lost by his burning of manuscripts we shall never know; they must have been better than most writers' best, but our American master of composition may surely be left, if any one may, with a reputation for wisdom in the case of his own genius and the development of its printed expression. His "protecting laziness," as Julian

* T. W. Higginson, "Short Studies of American Authors," 6.
† "Short Studies," 10.

Hawthorne calls it, saved him from crudity or imperfection in literary result; but in itself it must have been also a discretion that looked toward a high achievement or none.* We must take results as they are; some books are worth waiting for; better a decade of toil on a single good book than ten weak volumes in a year. Hawthorne's end crowned the work, and amply atoned for whatever actual indolence or selfishness he may have felt or shown.

At the head of Hawthorne's list of books, in point of time, stands "Fanshawe" (1828), long obscure because unreprinted, and still, in its first edition, a will-o'-the-wisp dancing before "collectors." When reissued in 1876, "Fanshawe" was discovered to be a quiet pleasant, old-fashioned little romance of an idealized Bowdoin, well enough in its way, but deserving neither praise nor blame. It is easy and agreeable reading, marked by a grace of style not usual among young men, and marred by a vagueness of characterization which Hawthorne afterward outgrew for the most part, though not entirely. His ideal touch here depicted men and women who seemed to live just above our world, or beyond it, not on it. Later, without loss of

"Fanshawe," 1828.

* "Was there ever such a weary delay in obtaining the slightest recognition from the public as in my case? I sat down by the wayside of life, like a man under enchantment, and a shrubbery sprung up around me and the bushes grew to be saplings, and the saplings became trees, until no exit appeared possible through the entangling depths of my obscurity."—Prefatory note (to his friend Horatio Bridge) to "The Snow Image, and other Twice-Told Tales."

grace and with gain of art, the romantic and the real became one in his stories.

"Twice-Told Tales," 1837–1842.

Nine years intervened between "Fanshawe" and the first volume of "Twice-Told Tales," the book that marks the true advent of its author in American letters. It displays in an entirety the idea, the method, and the form of utterance which were to be inseparably connected, in literary history, with the name of the writer, and which have been stated at length in the introductory pages of this chapter. The idea was to portray life in its actuality, as viewed by the romancer, that is to say, the prose-poet. The method was to select characteristic stories, half true and half imaginative, from the past times of colonial New England, a field unknown in fiction, but offering deeper themes than those Irving had found in New Amsterdam or Tarrytown, by the slow-sweeping Hudson. The form of utterance was a pellucid English displaying the poetic sense, and the slily humorous as well, but unmarked by the roundabout facetiousness of the writers who had gone just before. Hawthorne was intelligible to every one who could read at all, and he was found enjoyable by those who like to dwell upon the details of a brook, a landscape, a picture, a poem, or a beautiful woman. Hawthorne was always fully aware of the artistic importance of a title, and here, in the names of the tales and the collection as a whole, he began to show that felicity of nomenclature which did not desert him in his subsequent undertakings.

He had at length made an auspicious beginning of an unruffled career.

The "childly heart" of Hawthorne, the beatings of which were never stilled until the end of his earthly life, turned him in his earlier years to the writing of children's books,—now of New England history, as in "Grandfather's Chair"; now of such representatives of manhood or womanhood as Cromwell, Dr. Johnson, Sir Isaac Newton, Franklin, West the painter, or Queen Christina of Sweden, whose sketch portraits made up a little book of "True Stories from History and Biography." "A Wonder-Book and "Tanglewood Tales," one work under two names, retell a round dozen of stories from classical mythology. These four volumes, as the collected and final presentation of Hawthorne's juvenile-writing for fifteen or twenty years, are now properly included in all collected editions of his works. Children's story-books at their best are literature of the ideal in a true sense; the child is an instinctive poet, and often spurns all but the best that imagination can offer. That so few books for children are literary classics is the fault of writers, not of theme or audience. Said Hawthorne, in his prefatory note to the "True Stories from History and Biography": "This small volume and others of a similar character, from the same hand, have not been composed without a deep sense of responsibility.

Juvenile Stories: "The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair," 1841; "A Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys," 1851; "True Stories from History and Biography," 1852; "Tanglewood Tales, for Girls and Boys, being a Second Wonder-Book," 1853.

The author regards children as sacred, and would not, for the world, cast anything into the fountain of a young heart that might embitter and pollute its waters. And, even in point of the reputation to be aimed at, juvenile literature is as well worth cultivating as any other. The writer, if he succeed in pleasing his little readers, may hope to be remembered by them till their own old age,—a far longer period of literary existence than is generally attained by those who seek immortality from the judgments of full-grown men." The conscientious workmanship which Hawthorne thus gave to the myth-stories, and to the retelling of the tales of the Lady Arbella Johnson, Endicott and the Red Cross (to that sturdy governor he recurred again and again), Eliot and his Indian Bible, Phips' treasure, the Pine-Tree Shillings, the Liberty Tree, the exiles from Acadia, the Hutchinson mob, and the Boston Massacre, resulted in a patient and sympathetic art unsurpassed in his other writings, with which they are in general agreement as to plan, detail, and verbal style. For a parallel to this fact, which is demonstrable in an hour's reading, one must go to the works of Walter Scott.

Quiet charm.

In these lesser writings there is a charm that also appears in the minor tales and sketches in general, produced at various periods of Hawthorne's career, such as "Fragments from the Journal of a Solitary Man"; "Graves and Goblins" (one of his most characteristic sketches, and a masterpiece of English); the

brief biographies of Mrs. Hutchinson, Phips, Pepperell, Thomas Green Fessenden the satirical poet, and Hawthorne's college friend Jonathan Cilley; or even such an unspontaneous bit of kindly hackwork as the introduction to poor Delia Bacon's portentous "Philosophy of Shakespeare's Plays Unfolded." Hawthorne's style sometimes mystified the stupid, as in "The Marble Faun," or the delightful sketch of his dying years, "Chiefly about War Matters" (1862); but the style and tone were unmistakable, in their quiet and agreeable gentleness, which would have been a mannerism or thin affectation, had it just missed success, but which, in Hawthorne's strong hand, was a constant refreshment, as of a cool and leisurely brook in the shade.

To this quiet strength is due the constant and characteristic effect produced by the style of such stories as "The Gray Champion," "The Minister's Black Veil," "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment," the four "Legends of the Province House," "Peter Goldthwaite's Treasure," "Endicott and the Red Cross," or "Edward Fane's Rosebud," in "Twice-Told Tales." There is no radical difference between the two volumes of this work and its third or supplementary series; while the tales composing the two volumes of "Mosses from an Old Manse" are in all essentials similar. Nor is there any significance or importance in the title by which "The Great Stone Face," "The Canterbury Pilgrims," "The

"The Snow-Image, and Other Twice-Told Tales," 1852; "Mosses from an Old Manse," 1846.

Man of Adamant," "The Devil in Manuscript," and "The Wives of the Dead" are bound together; nor, in the latest collection, is there any but a general relation between "The Birthmark," "The Hall of Fantasy," "The Celestial Railroad," "The Procession of Life," "The New Adam and Eve," "Egotism; or the Bosom Serpent," "Roger Malvin's Burial;" or "Earth's Holocaust." These strong stories were written deliberately during many years; printed, in part, in divers periodicals; and at last conveniently collected. There is some difference, of course, between their average character and that of "The Gentle Boy" (in which Hawthorne dangerously approached sentimentalism), or that of his sketches of peculiar humor and observation, such as "A Rill from the Town Pump," "Sights from a Steeple," "Main Street," "Buds and Bird Voices," or "The Intelligence Office." But the difference is neither striking nor constant. Hawthorne, with rare lapses, was the patient and masterful observer and chronicler, unflushed by contagious excitement, but deeply sympathetic. The intensely human personages of fiction seized him as they did Dickens and George Eliot; but with slow might they were turned by his arm before the public eye and fixed there in the perpetuity of literary presentation. His self-control was almost absolute, but his perception and human feeling were not less deep and broad. The manner sometimes almost mastered him; but not often, in an age of mannerisms, did he fail to

create a prose-product of his own, in idea and word. He saw, and made, in the fullest sense; hence his place is with the writers of the highest rank. As an ideal realist he stands at the head of his class, with no other name as a rival in the same field,—neither French nor English in his form and manner. Like Goethe he connected nineteenth-century habits of accurate observation with the ideality of all centuries; but like Emerson he perceived the spiritual meaning of life. Moralist of moralists, his approach was artistically indirect; in cordial sympathy with romance, he was far removed from the excitable and hortatory romanticism of Hugo; a novelist of the heart, he found Wertherism nearly incomprehensible. His pictures of the moral sentiment were of the greatest because none had more completely been able to say, "I am a man."

Hawthorne's large view, combined as it always was with an essentially just measurement of his powers, enabled him to pass without uncertain touch from the twenty-page stories of his early life to the romances of his last fifteen years. This change, however, would have had in it somewhat of an experimental character if either "The House of the Seven Gables" or "The Blithedale Romance" had preceded "The Scarlet Letter." That book was the first of Hawthorne's romances in point of time, and on the whole it remains his best in absolute merit. It delineates the blight of a great sin upon a weak man, a strong woman, a fiend, whose cold blood

"The Scarlet Letter," 1850.

oozed from a heart of ice, a pure little child, and the community in which they lived. That community was old-Puritan; the weakling was a minister of the Gospel, and his paramour was the wedded wife of the avenger of a home into which affection came only as the destroyer. The soul-struggles of four human beings, against the background of stern righteousness and witch-superstition, are painted in hues of purple and black, with rays of nature's sunshine and childish innocence stealing across. In "The House of the Seven Gables" there are also but few characters; the general scene and atmosphere are the same; and the problematic nature of the psychological studies is as evident as before. But for Hester Prynne, in her nobility of helpful self-atonement for sinning, Arthur Dimmesdale, ethereal little Pearl, and inexorable Chillingworth, we have here less sombre personages, and a thread of narrative not so pitilessly black. He who had purely written a tale of adultery now turned his nice sense of observation and power of artistic delineation to a cheerier theme. This is the most agreeable of his longer books, and the gentlest and sunniest in its local color. The creator of soulful Hester Prynne, pure, maidenly Hilda, mysterious Miriam, and problematic Zenobia, here added to his gallery of pictures of true women Hepzibah Pyncheon, whose essential excellence consecrates her ancient eccentricity; and Phœbe, a wood-flower of New England girl-

"The House of the Seven Gables," 1851.

hood. "The Scarlet Letter" is a romance of sin; "The House of the Seven Gables" of heredity;" "The Blithedale Romance" of the forceful might of a woman's character, in struggle with strong environment and stronger self. Somewhat after the fashion of Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida," it burns with passion, the while the author stands aloof in a reserve only not cynical.

"The Blithedale Romance," 1852.

In "The Marble Faun" the development of character, before and after crime, under varying conditions and in the face of steadily increasing temptations, forms the central theme. The title "Transformation," by which the English public know the work, explains this root-idea of the book; though it was hardly worth while to change a poetic title into a commonplace one, for the sake of supposed clearness. The romance is longer and more varied than "The Scarlet Letter." But in both books the characters, their environment, and the time in which they live are well presented in an artistic whole, so that the progress of the story and the study is in neither interrupted by irrelevant or injurious details.

"The Marble Faun," 1860.

As one notes the large purpose of "The Marble Faun," he is reminded of a few lines of Emerson, who had the art, when he wished, of stating things so neatly that he would have pleased the most critical Gallic lover of *mots*. A lasting truth is here applied to literary criticism:

"'A new commandment,' said the smiling muse,
'I give my darling son: Thou shalt not preach.'
Luther, Fox, Behmen, Swedenborg, grew pale,
And, on the instant, rosier clouds upbore
Hafiz and Shakespeare with their shining choirs."

The preacher has his function and the artist has his; woe be to the latter if he sermonize when he ought to sing or paint. Seldom did Hawthorne forget the law which Emerson thus phrased. He chose august themes, as the great artists so often do; but those themes he elaborated from the artist's point of view. When "The Marble Faun" was published, several critics went so far as to declare that its author simply called the reader's attention to some abstrusely interesting problems of love, sin, and woe, and then dropped them at the close of two volumes, without reason or explanation. According to this view, the romancer was surely no volunteer moralizer, but was keeping too closely within the artist's province. Even from the artistic standpoint some disappointed denunciations were thrown at the work, on the strictly artistic ground that it was left incomplete as a mere creation. As time passed, there was bestowed upon the romance an approval denied at first; and the underlying purpose in the author's mind was seen to be fulfilled as regards both the soul and the form of this "Romance of Monte-Beni." The rosy cloud of which Emerson wrote has tinted the blacker skies which once hung over this latest of Hawthorne's completed fictions; and with its glow still

above us we shall at least be removed from the danger of treating "The Marble Faun" as anything else than a work of genius, written with the purpose which underlies the chief products of the imagination. "It is one of those works of art which are also works of nature, and will present to each thoughtful reader a new set of meanings, according to his individuality, insight, or experience.*

"The Marble Faun," alone among Hawthorne's longer works, has its scene in Italy, and is a direct outgrowth of the author's foreign residence, which began with his Liverpool consulate in 1853, under President Pierce.* Its local color is so true, and its local allusions are so many, that it has been used by some as a sort of Italian traveller's note-book, or guide-book to Rome. Its theme is the slow development of utter sin in the breast of a man at first so pure and true as to seem a mere conscienceless and spontaneous child of nature. The story shows how innocence, if merely negative and lacking the positive qualities of developed virtue, readily becomes the ally of sin and the doer of evil. Then follow the rise of the consciousness of guilt, the growth of remorse, and the perception that self-mastery, in some natures, affords a nobler happiness than can

* G. P. Lathrop, "A Study of Hawthorne," 255.

* In 1852 Hawthorne had written, for "campaign" circulation, an excellent, and calmly discriminating biography of his college mate and life-long friend, in whose company at last he died. On accession to office, Pierce bestowed upon Hawthorne a financially valuable office, and Hawthorne, naturally, was charged with political time-serving in his small friendly task,

ever be found in thoughtless existence and enjoyment. A witty writer once ably satirized extreme Augustinianism in an essay entitled "Hell as the Foundation of the Kingdom of Heaven." In this apparently repulsive and absurd idea there is an underlying truth: that while man possesses free-will, his struggle for mastery may lead him to a nobler height of joy than that of impeccable and untempted innocence. But the converse truth, that complete innocence may in itself raise the soul to a loveliness that has but to be continued in the heaven of the hereafter, is portrayed no less forcibly in the character of Hilda. The few personages of the romance typify almost a world. In Brother Antonio we have the shadow, now deepening, now lifting, of a depravity so deep as almost to seem total; in Miriam the blight of a sin neither accepted utterly nor as yet atoned for; in Donatello the spiritual ascent from animal existence toward a distant but ultimate moral triumph; in Hilda a lovely purity sullied only by the accidental knowledge of guilt; in Kenyon a man of something more than average goodness, yet, compared with Hilda,

"As moonlight unto sunlight, or as water unto wine."

The elaboration of the romance is marked by that finish which comes of the union of deliberate

while Pierce was blamed for favoritism. But it has always been the wise policy of the American government to send competent literary men into its diplomatic service; while Hawthorne sufficiently proved his disinterestedness by flatly refusing, in 1863, to withdraw an affectionate dedication to Pierce (then unpopular in the North), though warned by a discreet publisher that the book might be ruined.

art in conception with ample leisure for execution. Florence and Rome are portrayed in a series of pictures that are both incidental and essential, and therefore seem pleasurably indispensable. Hawthorne, as we have seen, was too great an author to quarrel with his environment. He most naturally, like all great writers, worked at home; but as his theme was the human heart, not the American heart, he studied it to advantage under Saint Peter's dome, and afterward wrote nearly all the romance on the soil of England. He changed his skies, not his soul, when he crossed the sea. Having patiently thought out his plan, he elaborated it, in this as in his other longer stories, without haste and without rest. He was so sure of the poetry of the idea that he did not weary of the details by which genius was made to take the form of permanent art.

Genius, art, and environment.

That the art of the story (in its original form, and without the final chapter added by Hawthorne after the publication of the work) is permanent, and not a mere study or puzzle, is now perceived by nearly all readers, as it was at first perceived by the wiser critics, such as John Lothrop Motley. To marry or to hang his heroes and heroines was no part of the romancer's plan, notwithstanding the numerous hostile criticisms at first evoked by the book —criticisms of its alleged inconclusiveness and hasty ending. In the familiarity of a friendly conversation Hawthorne once exclaimed: "As

Is "The Marble Faun" incomplete?

regards the last chapter of 'Transformation' in the second edition, don't read it; it's good for nothing. The story isn't meant to be explained; it's cloudland." * Having detailed, both broadly and minutely, the dawn, progress, and effect of sin upon several souls, differently constituted and differently related to the central crime, Hawthorne leaves to the reader the minute following-out of future penalty and expiation. The three parts of repentance, in the Roman Catholic scheme, are contrition, confession, and satisfaction. Applying this nomenclature to the case in hand, Hawthorne deems that his effect is made nobler by the absence of any detailed arrangement of the "satisfaction" division. Mrs. Hawthorne once wrote to a sapient critic of the smaller order, who doubtless thought he could have arranged the story much better himself: "Mr. Hawthorne is driven by his muse, but does not drive her; and I have known him to be in an inextricable doubt, in the midst of a book or sketch, as to its probable issue, waiting upon the muse for the rounding in of the sphere which every true work of art is." † In this particular work of art the author felt that the curtain might drop upon the play before the playwright attempted to settle everything; and there was evident wisdom in this course. Great problems have been studied, and the reader may follow them on and on, if he can and will. If he cannot,

* "Nathaniel Hawthorne and his Wife," II. 236.

† "Nathaniel Hawthorne and his Wife," II. 247.

it is useless to discuss the case with him. Some novelists and some readers apparently think that this is a world of completions rather than of beginnings; and that the idea of continuance or aspiration is fatal to any work of art. But art itself, on the contrary, would be false to life if it never expressed that constant notion of development and present incompleteness which lies at the very foundation of things; which is accepted as cordially by true science as by true religion; and without which the universe would seem to be a vast mistake.

I have devoted, perhaps, a disproportionate part of this chapter to the study of "The Marble Faun," not because it is Hawthorne's greatest book, but because it was his last, and suggests in a peculiar way certain elements in his final art. The literary historian has no right, it seems to me, to discuss "The Dolliver Romance" and its four antecedent studies,* though "Septimius Felton" and "Doctor Grimshawe's Secret" seem virtually complete in themselves. Ideas of a bloody footprint, of a life elixir, and of inherited tendency were slowly shaping themselves in the author's mind. He was

"The Dolliver Romance," *Atlantic Monthly*, July, 1864, Jan. 1865; also, with another fragment, Riverside Hawthorne, XI. 7–67.

* "A Look into Hawthorne's Workshop, being notes for a posthumous romance by Nathaniel Hawthorne; *The Century*, January, 1883. "The Ancestral Footstep"; outlines of an English romance (edited by G. P. Lathrop); Riverside edition of Hawthorne, XI. 431–521. "Doctor Grimshawe's Secret, a Romance," edited, with preface and notes, by Julian Hawthorne; Boston, 1883. "Septimus Felton, or, The Elixir of Life" (edited by Una Hawthorne); Boston, 1872.

elaborating them into artistic form with unusual care, due both to his wish to write a masterpiece and to his sense of failing physical strength. "The Dolliver Romance" must stand a fragment, like Thackeray's "Denis Duval," or Dickens' "Edwin Drood," and criticism of a fragment is superfluous.

> "The wizard hand lies cold,
> Which at its topmost speed let fall the pen,
> And left the tale half told.
>
> Ah! who shall lift that wand of magic power,
> And the lost clew regain?
> The unfinished window in Aladdin's tower
> Unfinished must remain!"

From these studies, however, we learn with what reticent care, in an age of hurried bookmaking, especially in fiction, did Hawthorne work. The same lesson is taught by his voluminous note-books of his art and life in America, England, France, and Italy, from which copious extracts were properly published after his death. The English diaries were the precursor and the treasury of the keen sketches afterward printed in finished form as "Our Old Home,"—as kindly and as searching as Emerson's "English Traits," though externally less pretentious. The American note-books, however, are most valuable of all, with their hints for a hundred stories that Hawthorne never wrote and that no other could write.

"Passages from the American Note-Books," 2 vols., 1868; from the English, 2 vols., 1870; from the French and Italian, 2 vols., 1872.

"Our Old Home," 1863.

They are, in their entirety, one of the deepest, truest, and purest personal records which literature can show,—high in thought and remarkably finished in style. It should also be said that they do not reveal to us an aimless night-prowler, a specialist in morbid anatomy, a literary alienist. They are the daily and unstudied memoranda of a mind great in power and true in purpose.

Hawthorne's faults.

I have thus considered at length, and with such conscientiousness as I could command, the literary work of a writer who seems to me both relatively and absolutely great. In this consideration the element of commendation has been paramount. Among his faults I have not been able to include morbidness or inartistic incompleteness. That he had faults, however, is unquestionable, and they should be stated definitely and frankly. Pure and fine in mental nature, he was sometimes unexpectedly coarse (I mean coarse, not indecent) in utterance. Descriptions, or at times entire stories, are aggravatingly impassive; he stands without as a spectator, and what should be the broadly dramatic view falls into an apparent indifferentism which we cannot reconcile with his general purpose and attitude in literature. The unconscious strength summoned from a rich personal experience is missed at critical points. At times, as in reading the works of the Laodicean realists themselves, we are ready to cry out against the frigid philosophy of curious external observation.

Again, while he was a great delineator of representative elements in the characters of men, women, and children, his colors were sometimes too pale and monotonous,—not the colors of flesh and blood. We seldom recognize a "Hawthorne character" on the streets of our daily walk. We are not always in the presence of vitality, but too often in that of personified ideas. His style is unvaried; half-a-dozen short stories, or three romances, read in succession, may for some readers emphasize this fact to the extent of weariness. The master seems a mannerist; self-control appears the dead level of a great mountain tableland, as dull as the valley-plains below.

But, after all, these faults are incidental, not inherent. Hawthorne was a great imaginative artist, with a highly ideal purpose and a strong and sure hand; therefore his fame, small at first, has steadily increased in the quarter of a century since his death, and shows no sign of waning as the years go on. He once wrote: "No man who needs a monument ever ought to have one." Hawthorne's monument is not beside the modest grave above which whisper the pines of Concord's Sleepy Hollow; nor is it in the commendations or analyses of his many critics. His monument is in his books, which so combine genius and art, imagination and human nature. Those whose eyes may see the fulness of human existence—its bright gayety and its gloomy grief and sin—perceive in Hawthorne's books the breadth of that mysterious thing in

Hawthorne's place in literature.

which we are, and which we call life. In "The Marble Faun" we are told that "a picture, however admirable the painter's art and wonderful his power, requires of the spectator a surrender of himself, in due proportion with the miracle which has been wrought. Like all revelations of the better life, the adequate perception of a great work of art demands a gifted simplicity of vision." Hawthorne's students, indeed, need not claim that they must possess high gifts of mind in order to perceive the art of his books; for he but requires in his readers somewhat of his own simplicity and naturalness. They must follow him as a master, for the time being, and learn in his school. He whose knowledge of human nature goes beyond shallow optimism on the one hand, and worldly cynicism on the other, need find no riddles in Hawthorne's pages. Perverse or dull was that French critic who once described Hawthorne as "un romancier pessimiste." It would be difficult to frame a statement less accurate, or one more likely to amuse the romancer himself, if this title has come to his knowledge in the land of shades.

I have said that Hawthorne's readers may follow him as a master, and learn in his school. The same advice is hardly to be given to those who not only read but write, and who would catch the secret of his literary success and apply it to their own novels or romances. Writers as well as readers, to be sure, may follow Hawthorne in his habit of minutely-faithful and ever-delicate observation of things great and small; they may dis-

cover that a realism which stoops to note the color of a single petal may be combined with a spiritualism which deems a heart-throb more important than a world of matter. They may study his pellucid English, simple and yet artistic; and may learn not to overcrowd their pages with too numerous figures or irrelevant episodes. He once made answer to a query as to his style: "It is the result of a great deal of practice. It is a desire to tell the simple truth as honestly and vividly as one can." This seems easy enough; but there is no likelihood that there will be, in America or elsewhere, another Hawthorne. From his name has been derived an adjective, but we always apply the word "Hawthornesque" to a single effect or undeveloped idea, and even then some restriction is usually added to the expression. His field, method, and style were in a large sense his own. I repeat that more than a quarter of a century must have elapsed before we can rank him with the greatest authors of the world; but I add with equal positiveness that he made for himself a place unoccupied before or since. There is an isolation of the greatest geniuses, even when they have followers; but when no followers appear, or succeed in their attempts, a genius is approved by his very loneliness. The Germans, with affection and reverence not unmixed with a puzzled awe, apply to their Richter the phrase "the only." To Hawthorne the same expression belongs in a higher sense, not only among American authors, but as compared with writers in the

broader field. At first unread, then underrated, then called morbid or at best cold and aloof, Hawthorne now stands before us as in some sense "the greatest imaginative writer since Shakespeare," of whose greatness we are "beginning to arrive at some faint sense,"—a greatness "immeasurably vaster than that of any other American who ever wrote."

In this greatness the spiritual element was of constant importance. Hawthorne, all in all, was no cold observer and impassive chronicler. As author, he looked into the heart of the world, and wrote. As man, this deathless soul could say in truth: "I have no love of secrecy and darkness. I am glad to think that God sees through my heart, and, if any angel has power to penetrate into it, he is welcome to know everything that is there. Yes, and so may any mortal who is capable of full sympathy.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LESSER NOVELISTS.

COINCIDENT with the steadily and symmetrically developing works of Hawthorne appeared numerous novels by numerous hands, some of which attained a circulation remarkable in the annals of fiction, but nearly all of which are now not unkindly forgotten. Fifty years is a long period in the fame of lesser literature, and it seldom leaves the renown of a novel in any glittering or conspicuous state. With the arrival of quiet times in the nation's history—at least as far as foreign wars were concerned—the book-makers had the leisure and the wish to furnish an abundance of stories to the readers so rapidly multiplying. With the spread of circulating libraries there came, of course, a corresponding increase of would-be responses to the all-prevalent human demand: "Tell me a story." Then, as now, the United States had no international copyright system, and then, as now, the book market was flooded with English fiction in paper covers. But every reading folk demands home-made entertainment, and the history of letters shows that there need be no fear that workers will fail in that division of literary composition which is at once the most remu-

Minor fiction before the war of 1861.

nerative and the quickest to attract individual notice and social notoriety. That novels may be first forgotten is equally true, but oblivion is the common fate of most books in other fields; Edwards' sermons and Willard's "Body of Divinity" are as undisturbed to-day as Mrs. Tenney's story, and even more quiescent than those of Mrs. Rowson.

The lesser novelists of America, in the second literary period, found their themes in American characters, scenes, and historic episodes; in imaginary adventures of foreign travel; in ancient history, and in sentiment or politics. One Northerner endeavored to crystallize the spirit of New England thought and life in a romance at once idyllic and religious; and one Southerner painted for the nineteenth century certain phases of the picturesque life of the old régime in eighteenth-century Virginia. From out this period of activity in lesser fiction there also stands forth, in vivid isolation that may diminish but cannot wholly disappear, the potent name of that individual and characteristic story which was one of the causes of Northern triumph in the war that freed the slave. On the whole, however, the period was characterized by the decline of the Indian romantic novel; the rise and collapse of the sweeter or more superficial sentimentalism in prose; and the comparative failure of the attempt to delineate American home life in various sections; for it cannot be claimed that the writers before the war produced much that equalled the folk-pictures or

character sketches given later by Miss Jewett, Miss Phelps, Miss Woolson, Eggleston, Bret Harte, "Charles Egbert Craddock," or Cable.

Sylvester Judd, 1813–1853.

A certain special significance, among all the novels of this period, has often been claimed for a story that is certainly curious and individual: "Margaret; a Tale of the Real and the Ideal, Blight and Bloom," by Sylvester Judd. Lowell, in "A Fable for Critics," declared it

> "The first Yankee book
> With the *soul* of Down East in't, and things farther East,
> As far as the threshold of morning, at least,
> Where awaits the fair dawn of the simple and true,
> Of the day that comes slowly to make all things new."

He even went so far in praise of its author as to tell his countrymen:

> "His name
> You'll be glad enough, some day or other, to claim,
> And will all crowd about him and swear that you knew him,
> If some English hack-critic should chance to review him."

Judd's recognition, however, never came in any general way, though a fit few have always bestowed upon his book that sort of admiration which is supposed specially to distinguish the thing praised, and also to reflect peculiar brilliancy upon those who praise. "Margaret" very narrowly escapes being unreadable, as an entirety; the accumulated purpose of years was required to make successful my own second attempt to reach its close; for it is crude,

"Margaret."

careless, irrelevant, improbable, and at times wearisomely sermonic. The author's ultimate plan was to make of this novel a sublimated Unitarian and American "Pilgrim's Progress," portraying true Christianity and the large means of its propagation among a free and enlightened people. That which another brilliant and efficient Unitarian believer—Hale—attempted a generation later in the most realistic and practical of stories, Judd sought to achieve by combining pure faith and pure moonshine in an idyllic and sensational novel of New England village life at the close of the last century. There can be no question, however, that this eccentric story is marked by crude power and irregular beauty. The social and religious "progressive" notions of the time, the homeland love of a patriotic New Englander, and the thoughts of a prose-poet were curiously jumbled together, so that "Margaret" is dream, picture, and riddle in one. The merit of loneliness, or isolation from other books of the sort, it clearly possesses, and its religio-poetic feeling is at times almost impressive. Judd was an idealist through and through, loving nature with all his heart, yet burning with a still stronger love for humanity. His novel is a sketch-book of snow-storms and summers, drunkenness and murder, bird-songs and sunbursts, vulgar poverty and flawless virtue blessed with all gifts that mortals can long for, and marching onward toward a beatific and regenerated future of humanity. The faults in "Margaret" are so numerous and conspicuous as to

remove it utterly from the list of great books, but its scattered beauties of thought and word are such as to make the reader regret that the author so lacked all shaping power of art.

Description of nature and of out-door experiences had now become a settled element in many American novels; and naturally, in a country still new, the fields and personages connected with pioneer adventure attracted the pens of writers in nearly all the several sections of the United States. "Nick of the Woods; or, The Jibbenainosay"—how could such a title fail to interest eager young readers everywhere, and turn their minds once more toward the unfelled forests of the far west? Its author, Dr. Bird, had been an experimenter, deemed successful in his day, in the writing of divers melodramatic plays, and had produced two historical romances of old Mexican life. It was his good fortune to give that robust actor Edwin Forrest one of his more conspicuous successes, in the tragedy of "The Gladiator," with its muscular hero Spartacus. Something exciting or imposing was then demanded by the majority of people who turned to the play or novel for their amusement; "The Gladiator" was thought to merit both adjectives, and "Nick of the Woods" at least the first. It was dramatized, and long held the boards without impinging very seriously upon the domain of the standard literature of the play. Such stories, after all, are better read than heard,

Robert Montgomery Bird, 1803–1854.

notwithstanding the obvious temptation they offer to playwrights.

The most marked characteristic of the tales of adventure produced in the period under review rests in their general uniformity of style and merit. Parts of "Nick of the Woods," selected at random, might easily be supposed to be extracted from one of Cooper's land-stories, while Cooper's sea-tales are not essentially different from some of the opening pages of Dr. Mayo's "Kaloolah." Even "The Dutchman's Fireside" of Paulding, notwithstanding the would-be humor and the playful touch which connect it with the work of the "Knickerbocker school," falls into general line with the other novels of exciting episode. Poe, who was certainly very clever in some of his criticisms upon contemporary work, said justly in a review of a previous novel by Bird—"The Hawks of Hawk Hollow: a Tradition of Pennsylvania"—that "upon the whole the style of the novel—if that may be called its style, which style is not—is at least *equal* to that of any American writer whatsoever." Elsewhere he declared it to be, "in many respects, a bad imitation of Sir Walter Scott," "composed with great inequality of manner—at times forcibly and manly—at times sinking into the merest childishness and imbecility." Fifty years do not add much to this criticism, which was applicable to dozens of books written in that fertile period. The prescription was simple. A manly adventurer on land or sea, an "interesting female," a tomahawk-

ing Indian after scalps, a British frigate with too few guns and too clumsy sails, together with various affluent squires, imposing commanders, cowardly villains, rustic wits, and housewifely matron, were all that was needed; the plots and escapes, the inland or marine scenery, the earthquaking thunder and the swollen torrents, and the final matrimonial adjustments could be inserted at will. Scott was the distant but powerfully regnant monarch, and Cooper the master of ceremonies; those who, like the latter, created original characters of manly force, survived the "mutability of literature," while those in whom "the merest childishness and imbecility" were too generously manifest lost very promptly their quickly-won fame.

The Indian, as delineated in "Nick of the Woods," is a darker and more repulsive creature than Cooper's red man. Dr. Bird's view of the aboriginal character approximated more nearly to Custer's than to Crook's.* Accordingly he did not hesitate to introduce descriptions merely brutal and gory, illustrating and appealing to that sentiment in human nature which got boundless delight from a gladiatorial combat in Rome, and which still falls into paroxysms of joy when a half-starved bull, in Spain or Cuba, is at last tortured to death by a dozen men. It must be said that Dr. Bird had plenty of intelligent supporters in his estimate of Indian ferocity and bloodiness; but its literary effect, in his own case

* See vol. I, p. 4.

at least, did not prove advantageous. Twenty or thirty years after the appearance of "Nick of the Woods," similar stories were produced in abundance by obscure or anonymous writers, bound in salmon-colored paper covers, and known everywhere in America as "dime novels," the literary diet of the lower classes.

Turning southward, as we follow the scenes depicted by the novelists of the period, there is found in the books of John P. Kennedy a gentler temper and a more delicate and finished touch. The very title of his best work, "Swallow Barn," forms a euphonious introduction to its leisurely and pleasant descriptions of rural scenes and character in the Old Dominion. It is a sort of Virginian "Bracebridge Hall." Kennedy, like Paulding, filled the office of Secretary of the Navy, and well illustrated that union of wholesome manliness with bookish tastes which was beginning to be a characteristic of our literature. The turmoil of American politics has over and over again left place, in diplomatic service or public station at home, for historians, essayists, novelists, or poets who also have been, like Kennedy, efficient and honored servants of their country and leaders of their party. The "scholar in politics" is an old, old figure in the United States; the problem to-day is to keep him in, not to get him in.

John Pendleton Kennedy, 1795–1870.

Kennedy was a Marylander, and his "Rob of the Bowl," "Swallow Barn," and "Horse-Shoe Robinson" were all of the South, being devoted

respectively to scenes and times of his native state (in the Roman Catholic Proprietary days), Virginia, and South Carolina (in the revolution). The first and last differed from "Swallow Barn" in that they turned definitely to the field of historical fiction rather than to the portrayal of country life in a placid story. Had Kennedy's graceful pen been driven by a genius more forcefully creative the result of his life-long devotion to literature would have been more considerable.

William Gilmore Simms, 1806–1870.

The representative Southern man of letters, after Poe and before Cable, Hayne, and Lanier, was William Gilmore Simms. His brain and pen were never idle, and he essayed nearly every sort of writing. Though far removed, in his South Carolina home, from the greater publishing centres, libraries, colleges, and author-coteries, Simms was poet, dramatist, Shakespearean editor, essayist, aphoristic philosopher, historian, biographer, lecturer, commemorative orator, legislator, pro-slavery apologist, journalist, magazinist, critic, and, above all, novelist. Authors have been hacks, helpers, or wage-earners since the art of writing was invented; but Simms' industry and fertility are remarkable in view of his environment, which was not favorable to such facile and miscellaneous productiveness. The novels, naturally, have survived the other writings, so that the "works" of Simms have come to mean, in publishers' parlance, merely the best of his romantic or historical fictions. The most attractive part of the novels, to

tell the truth, is their titles. One rolls from the tongue, with a certain pleasure, the names of Simms' best books: "The Partisan, a Romance of the Revolution"; "The Yemassee, a Romance of Carolina"; "Beauchampe, or, The Kentucky Tragedy"; "Southward Ho! a Spell of Sunshine." When Southerners took up "The Wigwam and the Cabin" or "Mellichampe, a Legend of the Santee," the very names made them feel that a literature had sprung from the sod. The whole list of his writings is here and there suggestive of historic men and events in the Carolina belt, or of the romance of adventure and discovery elsewhere in America and abroad; as well as of miscellaneous domestic or cheaply sensational themes. Purely exciting methods—the bowie-knife, the struggle, the revenge, the rescue—were often employed by Simms, whose hurried and careless pen would turn from "Eutaw" to "Richard Hurdis, or, The Avenger of Blood"; from "The Damsel of Darien" to "The Kinsmen, or, The Black Riders of the Congaree"; or, again, from far-away "Pelayo, a Story of the Goth" to "The Golden Christmas, a Chronicle of St. John's, Berkeley." Simms was a sort of American G. P. R. James, without James' regularity in quality of literary product. His tales highly interested a local audience because of their patriotic and sectional pictures and temper, and they were valued elsewhere as contributions toward the delineation of an important American region in an indigenous fiction. The romantic novelists of

the time turned most eagerly toward themes of Indian adventure, pioneer settlement or Revolutionary struggle, and therein they began, at least, to do wisely, according to the limitations of their day. The portrayal of living folk-life was to come later, for in Simms' time a "historic background" was commonly deemed essential. Indeed, the unpolished style, and the constant striving for immediate and striking effects, which characterized his fiction, were unfavorable to the production of novels of society, in the full sense, or of stories recording the characteristic vitality of actual existence in the region best known to the author. This fault was partly incident to the time, which influenced the man unfavorably; for Simms sometimes excelled in spontaneous picturesque description, while his familiar letters or comments on men are couched in excellent and telling phrase. There is no inconsistency in saying that Simms won considerable note because he was so sectional, and has lost it because he was not sectional enough. His stories are Southern and characteristic, but to paint actualities and things present—as do Cable, Miss Murfree, and the interesting group of young Southern writers—was not his chief purpose. The tinge of the past and the imaginary is thrown over most of the plots and descriptions, yet without that full and deliberate idealization which is needed. Hawthorne, in "The Scarlet Letter" or "The Marble Faun", so describes things far in time or space that the men and women seem of our own spirit-

ual world, and yet are helped or tempted by moral and mental forces from out the infinite. Cooper, with all his faults, is a novelist of large humanity, and hence a novelist of many lands and of more than one time. We do not ask Simms to be a Hawthorne; but in Cooper's field, at least, he should have been either a romancer of the past or a picturer of the present, if he could not be both. Between the two fields of fiction, as we now insist upon separating them, he has no place. It may be that future fashions in literature will restore to him some part of a lost fame; but such is not likely to be the case. Save for the masters, the world turns its face not backward in the search for stories.

The best novel written in the Southern States before the civil war is "The Virginia Comedians" of John Esten Cooke. Its author, like Simms, was an inveterate book-maker, and belonged distinctly to the romantic-sentimental school, not the realistic. He aimed to produce novels and novelettes of incident or passion, rather than sketches of local scenes and characters. The past of Virginia was more vivid, in his mind, than her present. But his stories are not sensational, in the sanguinary sense; and they describe certain conditions of an ancient and half courtly society. Instead of wigwam and cabin, Cooke presents the chariots and brocades, the "palace" and capital, the statesmen and beauties of picturesque old Williamsburg, once the Southern Boston. To its streets and mansions, its

John Esten Cooke, 1830–1886.

Raleigh Tavern and early theatre, he returns more than once, and in and near them occurs the action of "The Virginia Comedians." John Esten Cooke was himself an honorable representative of the best blood of the *ancien régime*—gentle, courtly, affectionate, unselfish, and brave; and his masterpiece is a series of historic pictures, warmed by bygone sunshine and given true spirit by the sympathetic promptings of the maker's heart. If "background" is needed in our fiction, it assuredly is here—that background in front of which stood, in his college days, the first statesman after Washington, of the early republic. If we seek color and action in a varied society, Thackeray himself asked no better, though he understood the scene and time less perfectly. Cooke, a fierce fighter in the war, was as sensible and kindly as Lee at its close, nor in his books did he display Simms' silly contempt for his Northerners, nor Cooper's or Poe's angry hatred of New England. His aim, says an anonymous eulogist, "was to do for Virginia what Simms had done for South Carolina, Cooper for the Indian and frontier life, Irving for the quaint old Knickerbocker times and Hawthorne for the weird Puritan life of New England." The modesty of the author himself would have made no such claim, for none more clearly perceived or frankly stated his general failure. He was, like Cable, wisely philosophic as to the futility of special pleas in literature. "If," said he, "there is anything endurable in Southern literature, I

feel sure that it will take care of itself." But this "Virginian of the Virginians", as he has been termed, this cousin and fellow-worker of John P. Kennedy's, left his state no unworthy literary legacy. When "The Virginia Comedians" fell out of print, it was for years one of the most sought of American novels; re-issued, it was welcomed; nor does it cease to interest those who turn, from time to time, to the study of a phase of life not less attractive because its antique grandeur now seems as faded and thin as the garreted satins in which it once was resplendent.

At this period English and American literature (of course including poetry and prose fiction) were beginning to feel the scientific and economic influence of the age,—an age which on its superficial side was searching for facts rather than dreams or fancies. Periodical literature, too, was multiplying a miscellaneous but in its way somewhat definite sort of information, and was thereby responding to a public curiosity, and creating it as well. Reflective or imaginative sentimentalism was presently to yield, in part, to the wide-spread wish for some new thing. The clever pseudo-scientific tales of Poe made answer to this wish, yet without sacrifice of integrity of literary merit; and were followed by a long line of American, English, and French imitations. Another response was made by Herman Melville in his brisk and stirring tales of the sea or sketches of travel, in which fact and fancy were mingled by the nervously impatient author, in

Herman Melville, b. 1819.

the proportion desired by his immediate public. Melville's own adventures had been those of a modern Captain John Smith in the Pacific islands and waters: so that the *pars magna fui* of his lively books gave them the needed fillip of personality, and duly magnified their elements of wonder. That brilliant power of delineation which, in Melville's conversation, so charmed his warm friends the Hawthornes, is apparently not heightened in his books, but would seem to be rather diminished by the exigencies of writing. But the personal narrative or fiction of "Typee," "Omoo," and "Moby Dick," with their adventurous rapidity of description of Pacific seas, ships, savages and whales, represented the restless facility which has always been an American trait, and which occasionally develops into some enduring literary success.

William Starbuck Mayo, b. 1812

Dr. W. S. Mayo, like Melville, had endured many vicissitudes of travel and adventure, and in his African romance "Kaloolah, or Journeyings to the Djébel Kumri, an Autobiography of Jonathan Romer," he drew upon his experiences abroad and at home, reverting to his school-days in northern New York, and to his father's marine exploits. That "Kaloolah" has barely outlived Melville's sprightly but now forgotten improvisations in literature is due to the combination, in its pictures of a far-away world, of the improbably romantic and the obviously satirical. Melville made some essays in the same direction, but failed completely

for lack of a firm thought and a steady hand. In Mayo's book the marvellously adventurous Jonathan Romer, at last the husband of an African princess, turns a reflective eye back upon the triumphs and foibles of the Anglo-Saxon political and social system which he has left behind. Often, since the coarse and strong "Travels of Mr. Lemuel Gulliver," have adventure and satire been mingled, and not infrequently with some such moderate success as Mayo here won; for no device is simpler than to change one's outlook in place and time, and survey mankind with the amusement found in a new perspective.

In the same search for novelty of theme, scene, and time, American fiction turned far backward toward the picturesque history of the classic past of Rome. Ware's "Zenobia," "Aurelian," and "Julian," with their occasionally stately—and sometimes stiff—descriptions of venerable bygones, really indicated, as truly as "Moby Dick" or "Kaloolah," that American writers were trying to broaden their field at the demand of a broadening public. Ware failed to equal such later books—in themselves not comparable with "Hypatia" or "Uarda"—as Wallace's "Ben-Hur" or Crawford's "Zoroaster"; indeed, the whole world never produced ten great historical novels, aside from those of Scott. Historical fiction is as tempting and seemingly easy as blank verse, but few men are so masterly as to win success in either. But Ware, in his "Letters from Palmyra" ("Zenobia") showed himself not

William Ware, 1797–1852.

destitute of that poetic imagination which is able to reproduce some part of the pageantry and the persecutions, the might and the weakness, of Rome in her splendid decline.

It should not be supposed that the fiction of the period was wholly given up to tales of pioneer adventure, romantic travel, or glorious antiquity; to the Virginian historic pictures of Cooke; or to Judd's utopian dreams of regenerated man. Stiff moral sentiment, dressed in a garb that now seems somewhat artificial and extravagant, but which exactly suited the fashion of the day, was the lay-figure that stood beside the desk of many a novelist. Catharine Sedgwick, who connected the earlier and the later days, could write a story of adventure which some were once ready to assign to Cooper's pen. But her axiomatic novels chiefly aim to show that honest poverty is better than hollow wealth; that mistresses should know something about housework and treat their servants humanely; that self-improvement should be a constant study; that deportment portrays the inner man; that single life is an honorable estate for woman; and that the New England homestead is a pleasant place.

Catharine Maria Sedgwick. 1789–1867.

Miss Sedgwick, in addition to her novels, wrote several stories for children. It is not customary, in literary history, to include juvenile books in the list of works worthy of serious mention, nor to discuss them as related to the intellectual tendencies of the time. The classics of childhood were not, it is true, primarily written for children; the

"Arabian Nights" are folk-products; the "Pilgrim's Progress" is the most serious of allegories; "Robinson Crusoe" is a tale of a typical Englishman, thrown utterly on his own resources; while "Gulliver's Travels" aimed to be a vitriolic satire upon humanity itself. But in the nineteenth century, when the Grimms in Germany, Hugo in France, Scott in England, and Hawthorne in America address a child-public and meanwhile attract child-hearted readers of every age, it is manifestly too late to ignore the "juvenile" as an honorable contribution to literature in the department of fiction, and not measure it by general canons. In America many writers, from Lydia Maria Child to Miss Alcott, have developed the juvenile; but the representative name of all, a name well entitled to consideration here, is that of Jacob Abbott.

Jacob Abbott, 1803–1879.

In the course of a literary life of unremitting activity, Abbott wrote one hundred and eighty volumes with his own pen, and in addition wrote in part, or edited, thirty-one. Most of these were not of great size, but not a few of them called for patient and sometimes extended research in historic or scientific fields. I know not what American author has produced a larger library, or one more wholesome and helpful throughout. These books fall naturally into six divisions: religion, education, science, travel, history, and juvenile fiction; the representative types of which are "The Young Christian," the "Little Learner Series," the "Sci-

ence for the Young" series, "A Summer in Scotland," "Abbott's Illustrated Histories" (written in part by John S. C. Abbott, the author's brother), and the "Rollo Books" and "Franconia Stories." Abbott created and systematically continued and popularized a characteristic style, in which didacticism and interest were pleasingly joined. To tell an instructive story in an attractive way, and thereby to impress his mark upon his time, was his life-work in letters. The clear style, the manner of the dialogue, the introduction of anecdote and explanation, the choice and arrangement of pictorial illustrations, and even the typographical appearance, were the author's own, and have never been exactly reproduced by any of his many imitators. Abbott was as closely related to his day as the authors of "Evenings at Home" were to theirs. If, as his son and biographer says, "The Young Christian" is his most representative work, the long list of historical biographies, and the "Franconia Stories," are his best products. To the former Abraham Lincoln professed his indebtedness for about all the historical knowledge he had; to the latter belongs the name of New England's classics for children. The United States is a nation of readers, and in an altogether exceptional degree a nation of young readers; Abbott found the inclination, and at once addressed it and developed it by his work. To claim that his stories and biographies have a high literary rank would be unwise; to deny their place in the development of American letters

would be false. In themselves, and yet more in their indications, they stand for a nineteenth-century habit of authorship which, notwithstanding the production by some hands of a wearisome amount of worthlessness, is likely to increase in importance with the passing years.

Turning again from the juvenile story to the general field of fiction, one notes, with not unkindly interest, that a "phenomenal success," in days of eager reading and impressionable "sensibility," was won in particular by three stories, all written by women, and all attaining a circulation to be reckoned by hundreds of thousands. Of the three "The Wide, Wide World" of Miss Susan Warner was the worst in itself and the best-loved by the public. All literature cannot show so lachrymose a book; the heroine burst into tears, silent or paroxysmal, in accordance with a numerical average amounting to every-other page of the two-volume novel. The piety of the work is unquestionable, and it is still deemed a strong story by those who read it in impressionable girlhood and have not since refreshed their memory by recurring to its briny springs. "The Lamplighter," by Miss Cummins, though somewhat exclamatory and didactic, was more natural in its honestly human tone; had it been compressed by an artist within the limits of Dickens' "Cricket on the Hearth" it would have been a worthier addition to the literature that lives more than a decade.

Susan Warner, 1818–1885.

Maria S. Cummins, 1827–1866.

Midway between the appearance of "The Wide, Wide World" and "The Lamplighter," two years after the one and two years before the other, was published, in 1852, that novel which exerted a moral force in politics unequalled in the history of English fiction. Harriet Beecher Stowe, had she never written "Uncle Tom's Cabin," would have held at least a respectable place among American authors. New England home-life on the coasts of Maine and Rhode Island is aptly described in "The Pearl of Orr's Island" and "The Minister's Wooing"; while "Oldtown Folks" and "Oldtown Fireside Stories" are excellent additions to our rich library of folk-sketches. In Sam Lawson Mrs. Stowe created a character as true to the life, in his way, as Lowell's Hosea Biglow. All this other work, however, is not indispensable, and pales before the intense fire that has long glowed in the pages of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." In the far cold North, where her husband was at the time a professor in Bowdoin College, Mrs. Stowe looked toward the sunlit South, and beheld beneath fair skies all the horror of the wide-spread and blighting evil of human slavery, with its curses of lust and lash, broken homes and bleeding hearts; hate and cruelty and greed on the one hand, and the dogged endurance of hopeless woe on the other. The horrible system of slavery was not unmitigated by occasional kindness; many a freedman has sincerely said that sorrow and suffering never came until abolition severed him from the old

Harriet Elizabeth (Beecher) Stowe, b. 1812.

master and mistress, and threw him all unfit upon the world, with a ballot in his hand but no wisdom in his brain. Yet no question of past political expediency, no consideration, even, of exaggeration in the book, as regards the average condition of the negroes in the Southern States, can blind our eyes to the essential and enduring success of the novel. It is far from faultless in development of plot, delineation of character, or literary style; but it strongly seizes a significant theme, treats it with immediate originality and inevitable effect, and meanwhile adds several individual characters to the gallery of fiction. It was everywhere an anti-slavery argument because its pictures of episodes in the history of slavery were so manifest and so thrilling. Read in every state of the North and in parts of the South, and translated into twenty languages of Europe, it aroused the indifferent and quickened the philanthropic. Its power was felt, perhaps unconsciously, before a quarter of its pages had been read.

The author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" had the wisdom—not possessed by the pessimistic or self-blinded delineators of later woes in Russia—to brighten her pages by touches of humor and kindly humanity, and to obey the canons of the novelist's art as well as those of the moralist's conscience. Thereby her force was quadrupled, for literature both popularizes and perpetuates morality, while morality without art is fatal to literature. The book remains a vivid panorama of people and scene in a bygone time, now re-

manded by final war to a past that must ever be historic and can never be repeated. The "abolition of tribal relations in Christ" was the broad theme of a Christian woman; and in treating it she produced an art-result of such inherent merit that the hand helped the soul as much as the soul the hand.

CHAPTER XII.

LATER MOVEMENTS IN AMERICAN FICTION.

As the closing years of the nineteenth century have worn away, fiction has monopolized more and more of the attention of writers and readers in England and America. As a means of popular amusement it has completely overshadowed the drama; and it has demanded for itself three-fourths of the circulation of many public libraries. The masters—Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot, Hugo, Tourguéneff, Cooper, Hawthorne, Poe—have departed, leaving no successors for the time being; but the hope of easily winning money or notoriety, mayhap even fame, has crowded the literary ranks with story-tellers of every temper, theme and residence and of every ability save the highest. Watching the motley procession of fiction-makers, the critic is tempted to say with Omar Khayyám:

> "A moment's halt—a momentary taste
> Of Being from the well amid the waste—
> And lo!—the phantom caravan has reach'd
> The Nothing it set out from—oh, make haste!"

But the later and younger story-tellers, novelists, and romancers of America have brought to their work a zealous if irregular ambition, a com-

prehensive eye, and a skilful pen. Their best short stories are unsurpassed in the literature of the time; and while few indeed of their books or names will live,—half a generation sometimes envelops a novelist's "fame" in permanent shade, —the average excellence of their work proves clearly enough the general resources of the American mind in this division of literature, and the certainty with which "the long result of time" promises to produce, once more, works of genius and imagination in the full sense. American story-tellers since the civil war have shown powers distinctly in advance of those of the lesser novelists in the years immediately preceding that conflict; and their keener vision and simpler methods have summoned before us many American types and scenes previously unnoted or unfamiliar. This manifest improvement in the quality of minor fiction since 1861 has been chiefly due to an honest attempt to describe American life as it is, in its breadth, height, and depth.

These later writers of fiction, however, though they fill a large place in the immediate literary landscape, have not completed their work nor given sure indication of their ultimate place in the intellectual history of their country. Many of them are still in youth or middle life, with their larger hopes unfulfilled and their more ambitious plans unmatured. The only valuable method of studying their works is obviously to pay small heed to single volumes or individual writers, though intrinsically more praiseworthy than some

of their predecessors chronicled in these pages; and simply to take note of the principal tendencies of the American fiction of the time. This may readily and profitably be done, for the lines of subject and method are drawn with sufficient clearness to serve both as a record and as a prophecy.

The first and most significant tendency, as I have said, is toward the production of novels of the soil, and the presentation of American types and scenes. The earlier writers had indeed followed to some extent this obvious and common method, but their successors have discovered new fields and characters, even more typical and interesting because less enveloped in the haze of the authors' own intellectual fancy. They have given large play to humanity, with its hopes, fears, loves, hates, and ordinary experiences; and a true realism has portrayed men and women as they are,—creatures with souls as well as bodies and minds. The portrayal has been more successful in sketch than in finished picture, in short story than in rounded novel; but it has been well worth making, and has been well made. The dash, and fresh wholesomeness, and full-blooded life of the hastily-written and posthumously-published tales of Theodore Winthrop, issued in the midst of the civil war, fitly ushered in a fashion of plain truth-telling in fiction, which nevertheless remembered that life has its color and romance as well as its dun tameness, and that from its wood and ashes the fire of aspi-

Theodore Winthrop, 1828–1861.

ration flames up toward the ideal. The war itself produced, North and South, no novel of commanding importance—wars seldom effect general literature with immediate force, though their ultimate stimulus is greater; but this circumstance is of small significance in view of the fact that upon the pages of our fiction are fully drawn the character and lives of the men—and women—who fought that war and who make the nation what it is.

New England itself, already old, sometimes conventional, and not previously destitute of authors of ability, has been newly painted by several of these later writers. Sarah O. Jewett portrays the ancient, decadent, respectable, gentle, and winsome seaboard town, and tells of the life therein. The courtly old lady in black lace cap and mitts, living in a great square house with a hall running from door to door, and rich in mahogany and cool quiet; the New England girl of the better class, well educated, of good descent, and sufficiently aware of the proprieties of life, yet fresh, happy, and fond of a "good time"—these two figures are alone worth more, as contributions to fiction, than any artificial portrayals of the "sparkling," sensational, or satirical talking-machines which are sometimes supposed to represent American life. In the New England which Miss Jewett so pleasantly and faithfully portrays, are self-respecting people, aristocratic in the only true sense; bringing up their daughters in freedom, and yet in homes, modestly but not conventually; speak-

Sarah Orne Jewett, b. 1849.

ing the good English which their ancestors brought from old England two centuries ago; and making, as well as finding, "life worth living."

Naturalism, by which term Miss Jewett's general method may be fitly described, also characterizes the literary work of other New England women. Thus, for instance, let him who would know the real Yankee—Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde—read such grimly humorous stories as "Freedom Wheeler's Controversy with Providence," "Miss Lucinda," or "The Deacon's Week," by Rose Terry Cooke. The longer and shorter stories of Miss Elizabeth Stuart Phelps are more intense than those of Miss Jewett; but they are also local in scene and color, and, like Mrs. Cooke's, are pervaded with a moral idea. Miss Phelps deals with stormier moods and with profounder aspirations, but the New England books of the three writers differ in selected type and intensity of tone rather than in kind. If it be said that Miss Phelps' glimpses of the unseen in "The Gates Ajar" and "Beyond the Gates" open a heaven that is little more than a reconstructed New England, and fail to portray adequately the tender human hopes and deep and true beliefs which lay in the author's mind, let it not be forgotten that hope and faith and sympathy, on the human side, find a fit expression in such stories of hers as "The Tenth of January," in which the tragedy of life and the

Rose (Terry) Cooke, b. 1827.

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, b. 1844.

tragedy of art combine, before the background of a New England factory town.

A simpler, less intense and nervous, and more genial and humorous naturalism is the distinguishing note of the stories of Louisa M. Alcott. Their fresh and staid spirit—for childhood is demure as well as frolicsome—make them acceptable to adults and children alike. Any juvenile story, aiming to be swift and cheery rather than artistic, and accompanied by numerous predecessors and successors from the same pen, is likely to be lost in the multiplicity of the lesser books of literature; but Miss Alcott's wholesome young New England girls and boys represent types, at least, which will remain, in fact and in fiction, long after her essentially ephemeral books are forgotten. Miss Alcott, like Miss Phelps, was not oblivious to the deeper romance and shadow of American life, which brightened or darkened the strong pages of "Moods," her first considerable novel.

Louisa May Alcott. 1833–1888.

Another, deeper, and more artistically significant and serene delineation of New England life is made in Higginson's "Malbone, an Oldport Romance." Here are environment and background fit for the most thoughtful artist in prose fiction: the ancient sea; a town already venerable and courtly, by American standards; a moist climate that marks the English complexion and restful temper upon the faces of the young American residents; and a modern, sensational, fashionable life surging

Thomas Wentworth Higginson, b. 1823.

around the slowly-moved landmarks of the chief of our watering-places. Here Higginson viewed life and put some part of its vital blood into a book of quiet literary strength, of romantic action, of lambent humor, and (in its capitally-drawn character of Aunt Jane) of fidelity to that shrewd and indigenous New Englandism described elsewhere by Mrs. Stowe or Miss Phelps. "Malbone" is an Emersonian novel in its view of inanimate nature as mirror and monitor of human nature,—the eternal theme of romancer and poet.

I have been considering some novelists and story-tellers of New England. In the two books of Mr. Philander Deming, one of the least sensational but one of the most praiseworthy of recent writers, the scenes are laid in the Adirondack region of Northern New York, or in the neighboring cities of Albany and Burlington. In Mr. Deming's work the form is something like that of Mr. James' stories, but the spirit is the author's own. In "Lida Ann," or "Tompkins," for instance, Mr. Deming shows that he possesses the double power of describing details minutely, and of delineating the life behind the details. By little touches we are made to see character and scenery; and we are also shown, in deeper tints, the kind of existence led by the personages of the tales. Their works and ways are humble, like the grim and mean but pathetically human love-making in Mary E. Wilkins' somewhat similar Vermont story called "A Humble Romance." But the essential spirit of

Philander Deming, b. 1829.

the better fiction is never lost. In "Lida Ann" a commonplace little Adirondack girl marries a coarse, "emotional," and pretentious revivalist; then she runs away with a "Spiritualist" humbug; but at last come the real regeneration of the revivalist by the gospel of hard work and modest self-sacrifice, and the return of the foolish wanderer to a respectable life. In "Tompkins" is merely the life-story of a Vermont girl who silently supports an unsuspecting loved one in his college course, and who goes to her grave before he learns the secret. Yet these "simple stories," in very truth, are told with such art, with such fidelity to petty detail and to high purpose, that they cannot be omitted in any estimate of our later fiction. They portray in clear lines and firm tints the plain or rude American country life from which come the very bone and sinew of the nation. Rectitude and hope lie behind the simplest American society; a rectitude based on an essentially noble self-reliance, and a hope that may lack refinement or intelligence but not spiritual strength. Even in the Adirondack wilderness is a view of life that forms a striking contrast to the pale pessimistic woe of the Russian countrymen of similar social grade, as shown by such local masters as Tourguéneff or Tolstoi.

The most successful pictures of American characters and characteristic scenes, whether chosen from the east or the west, from city or from country, have unquestionably been presented in such short stories as those of Miss Jewett, Mrs. Cooke,

Miss Phelps, or Mr. Deming, rather than in long novels. Bret Harte is distinctly at his best in his brief stories and sketches, and at his worst in his larger books; Mr. Cable's "The Grandissimes" and "Doctor Sevier" are, at best, no more than equal to the separated studies of "Old Creole Days"; while Miss Murfree ("Charles Egbert Craddock"), an apparent exception, writes novelettes, or long-short stories, rather than novels. Others of the newer and younger Southern writers are sketchers, not romancers; and as we look at the whole field of the new American fiction we note excellence in the small, rather than any largeness of creative ability. But a short story, like a short poem, is as legitimate as a long one; and if our large and fine new creations in fiction are few indeed, at least we escape thereby the weariness of prolixity. The explanation is not far to seek: our broad and varied national life, from the Maine ship-builders to the Louisiana Creoles, from Miss Woolson's lake country to Miss Murfree's Tennessee mountains or Bret Harte's mines and gulches, affords as yet so abundant material for description that the literary painters naturally multiply portraits, and little groups of figures, and *genre* pictures, rather than inclusive or ideal scenes. One such sketch as "Peter the Parson," in Miss Woolson's "Castle Nowhere: Lake Country Sketches," is so true and therefore so valuable that I care not if the author's ambitious books, "Anne" and "East Angels," despite

Constance Fenimore Woolson, b. 1845.

manifest touches of a strong hand, seem altogether unimportant in comparison. In "Peter the Parson" we have the cold, raw, scantling-and-boards life of a hateful little Philistine settlement in Michigan; but we have also high if mistaken religious devotion, the half-hopes and crushed possibilities of a real love, and a supreme self-sacrifice like that which lies at the very heart of Christianity—and that is enough.

Edward Eggleston, b. 1837.

A little farther westward lie the scenes of Edward Eggleston's tales of pioneer life in the "new west" of 1840. The author was able to put into his books sights and experiences of which his own life had taught him. As an itinerant preacher among the Methodists, and later as a Sunday-school worker, he well learned of the shifting borderland between civilization and barbarism; and his novels tell us truly of the life lived at the outposts, in log cabins built on virgin soil. The very titles of his works—"The Hoosier Schoolmaster," "The Circuit Rider," "The Mystery of Metropolisville," "Roxy"—illuminate the scenes and characters described. The scenes are rough and the characters "tough," in the better sense and sometimes in the worse; but the fidelity with which youth and age in the backwoods are painted makes the books, like so many other American works, at least valuable essays toward that full delineation of the whole country which our novelists seem surely, though irregularly, to be making. America includes many a "Metropolisville," as well

as Boston or New York. Eggleston's western stories present passing phases of a life-character that is in itself permanent. Thin and poor as that life may be in externals, it is even opulent in courage, cheer, and manly helpfulness. The men and women of these Hoosier tales may live in bark-covered log houses, but their hearts are full of true blood and their sinews are of steel. It is fortunate that they found a chronicler who understands the true relation of fiction to the study of life.

Francis Bret Harte, b. 1839.

With a humor less spontaneous but neater and more deliberate than Eggleston's, Bret Harte has made the early Californians, good and bad, known throughout the world of readers. An evident disciple of Dickens, he joins wit and pathos in that union which has ever marked their near kinship in English fiction. Some of his tales almost seem the apotheosis of mere grit and friendship, at the expense of all other moral qualities; they are full of sentiment, but so far removed from sentimentality that they appear to revel in coarseness and general badness, only caring that they laud devotion and self-sacrifice, courage and rude tenderness, and scarify treachery and hypocrisy. Mr. Harte can give the best of reasons for this nature of his stories: it was and is the real nature of the characters described. If his realism brings very near us such things as gamblers, prostitutes, robbers, "speculators," pistols, knives, cards and dice, it does not forget the community of human nature, and

the higher moods and tenderer impulses of hearts covered by rough flannel or tawdry finery. Bret Harte's best stories—usually the shorter ones, such as "The Luck of Roaring Camp," "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," "How Santa Claus came to Simpson's Bar," "An Apostle of the Tules," or "A Ship of '49," set forth with large truth and with accuracy of detail certain passing episodes in America. The life they portray with kindly and swift humor, with grim impartiality, and sometimes with a coarseness not essential, is genuine; it is a life which is apparently brazenly selfish in the struggle for existence or gain, but is, after all, deeply stirred by generous instincts and helpful humanity. Bret Harte's sharpers or miners of the far West, his owners of ranches, rough pioneer farmers, and rude, uncultured women, are for the most part united in favor of sincerity and "bed-rock" honesty, traits which are by no means least common in the slums of New York or the gulches of California. The life of his stories, miserably limited as it may be in breadth and wealth of opportunity, is yet a full and rich life in those things which most make existence desirable and progress possible. Its Americanism is genuine; that of the national or quaintly local earth and sky, but also of universal man shown in new scenes and phases. Harte's wit has greatly helped his rise in public favor,—the wit which tells us how suddenly the rascally gambler, outwitted by the "heathen Chinee," discovered that "we are ruined by Chinese cheap

labor." But the wit of "Plain Language from Truthful James," or the pathos of others of Harte's poems, finds a better expression in his prose idyls of the land of rough ore, and is chiefly to be valued not for its own sake, but as an aid to the presentation of interesting and actual types of unfamiliar character. The presentation is irregular, often hurried or weak, and not more than once or twice marked by the highest art; but, in the author's own words, it is "quite content to have collected merely the materials for the Iliad that is yet to be sung."

After the end of the civil war and the violent death of slavery, there appeared in several of the Southern States a self-reliant literary spirit,—shown especially by many young story-tellers and poets whose fame is still unknown,—and a habit of faithful portrayal of men and things close at hand that promised much for the future of American fiction. Southern provincialism before the war, though intensely local in its pride, was self-complacent, and not sufficiently keen-eyed to see that provincial types and scenes, accurately and impartially presented, may be made contributions to national or even universal literature. Instead of mere pride in the soil has come a living interest in the characteristics and products of the soil; in place of a somewhat artificial and perfunctory praise of Southern writers, we now have a spontaneous and hearty recognition of the inherent merit of their writings. The old temper might have expressed itself in the words: "It must be

good because it is Southern"; the new says: "It is good, and it is also Southern."* Like Bret Harte, Miss Murfree and Mr. Cable rely for success upon the fidelity with which localism is given a universal interest. To sight they add insight; and their painstakingly minute touches are directed by a knowledge of humanity beneath eccentricity. In presenting "The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains" of Tennessee, and the rude folk to whom he preached, Miss Murfree adds to description that ideal or imaginative power which, while sacrificing no jot of truth, sees the soul through flesh and bones, and discerns the meaning of life, however sordid or coarse it apparently is. The mighty mountains, and deep gorges, and overshadowing trees in her books, as in Bret Harte's California stories, at first seem to dwarf the vulgar men and women who crawl about them; but Miss Murfree's Prophet, and Harte's Apostle of the Tules, and Miss Woolson's Peter the Parson are yet able to rise to a Sidney Carton height of self-sacrifice for others. The externally hateful and wicked and mean, in our worst American life, is yet instinct with the higher optimism; for

Mary Noailles Murfree ("Charles Egbert Craddock"), b. 18—

* An able, unquestionable, and admirably concise and strong expression of the true Southern attitude toward American literature is made by a very competent authority, in a personal letter to me from which I am permitted to quote. Colonel J. Lewis Peyton, of Steephill-by-Staunton, Virginia, is peculiarly qualified to speak on this subject,—by descent, by remarkably extended family connections with the great men of the South, by important services to the Confederate States when their representative in England, and by his own relation to literary work. He writes: "In the South (as

"It is not only in the rose,
It is not only in the bird,
Not only where the rainbow glows,
Nor in the song of woman heard,
But in the darkest, meanest things,
There alway, alway, something sings."

The tone and color may be strange, and certainly are presented with grim accuracy; if the moral appears, it is not because these writers preach, but because human life preaches, however unwelcome to finical critics its sermon may be.

The new Southern writers have much to do and much to learn. They have not, as yet, begun to exhaust a rich store. Before the war was the *ancien régime*, picturesque and peculiar; then came the storm and stress of a conflict that burned the South—far more than the North—with searing flame; now rises the new South, a patriotic part of the common country. The field for fiction, whether romantic or realistic, broad novel or narrow sketch, is wide, and seems reasonably sure of cultivation. If the large mind and large manner are not apparent as yet, the same is true in the case of the writers of the West. By and by the masters will come, here one and there another, it may be at long intervals; for not

with you) nobody now thinks of the birthplace of an American writer; we only wish to know what he has turned a sheet of white paper into, with pen and ink. And I hardly think any but a man of diseased mind and imagination, like Poe, would ever have uttered such sentiments as he did as to Edward Coate Pinkney. The enlightened men of this region, as of yours, know no North or South in literature—only one grand Republic of Letters, in which every man standeth according to the soundness of his heart and the strength of his understanding."

often, at the North or anywhere, appears an author deserving to be called great. The localism of a narrow field does not in itself, of course, prevent a book or an author from attaining greatness or showing the large manner. The single name of Hawthorne is enough to prove that high genius may cultivate the narrowest field with noble literary results, and that the ablest mind finds and almost makes its *locale* in New England or Old, beneath the shades of Puritanism or of Romanism.*

Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett, a writer of English birth but of Southern residence, has shown how mental character and literary preference choose their field, and how the author's thought may profitably revert to old scenes or distant types. Her bright and fresh little love stories are as unimportant as they are numerous, and her portrayals of certain Southern characters and life-phases are entertaining but not significant, with the exception of occasional portraitures of self-re-

Frances Eliza (Hodgson) Burnett, b. 1849.

* "Literature as a profession has until quite recently found but few followers in the South. . . . . The institutions and traditions of Southern life were unfavorable, if not openly antagonistic, to the establishment of the literary profession. The leisurely and cultivated, among whom literary productiveness would most naturally have its rise, preferred, as their fathers had preferred, the career of the statesman, and its honors were their ambition, to the attainment of which the legal profession was the natural stepping-stone. The art of expressing thought on paper they regarded as an elegant accomplishment, to be cultivated as a gentleman's recreation, not the serious business of his life, for which he was to receive remuneration. That they were a race of polished letter-writers family archives conclusively prove; and able essays on political subjects not infrequently came from their pens. Thus there were men who did literary work, and good work

liant girls like Esmeralda or Louisiana. Such blatant and let us hope passing types as the American young woman whom Mrs. Burnett calls "A Fair Barbarian" may entertain an hour; but better than a hundred such studies is her picture of "That Lass o' Lowrie's," and life in the Lancashire mines of England; or the unmitigated pathos which we are made to share in "Surly Tim's Troubles," a sketch of transatlantic grief that appeals to the worldwide heart.

The renaissance of literature in the South has produced no more interesting result than George W. Cable's tales of picturesque Louisianian life. A keen observer and a fearless painter—for fearlessness is needed if one would faithfully depict the life of a sensitive folk—Cable is also a fine artist in his touch and at the same time a wholesome moralist. New Orleans and Louisiana, far and unfamiliar, half French and therefore half foreign, a later addition to the territory of the United States, both rich and poor, chastened but not humbled or crushed by the civil war—what better scene could

George Washington Cable, b. 1844.

too, to whom the writing of books was neither the prime aim in life nor yet purely a pastime. . . . . Simms made the prophesy that there would never be a Southern literature worthy of the name under a slave-holding aristocracy. Social conditions were against it. When the result of the war brought about a new state of affairs, and the people of the South, at first stunned by the mightiness of the blow, went bravely to work to meet the demands of the situation, the pen, heretofore a political weapon or the attribute of cultured leisure, was soon made to take its place beside the plough. In Southern life was presently perceived abundant material, rich and varied, possessing high literary value and interest. Letters as a career found a larger following."—Charles Washington Coleman, Jr. (of Williamsburg, Va.) in *Harper's Magazine*, May, 1887.

a novelist find? It was Cable's by birth and residence, and he made it his anew by the larger purpose and the lesser art of his books. Here are the romantic and the picturesque in theme, and the dainty and welcome in treatment. "Old Creole Days" and "Madame Delphine" happily illustrate that union of local and limited study with unconsciously large and free presentation which is a mark of true literature; and these best of his books, as well as the longer romantic novels called "The Grandissimes" and "Doctor Sevier," view the ideal sky through the lower atmosphere of the real. *Post nubila lux:* here humor and pathos and tender humanity do not long leave tragedy in unmitigated gloom, nor is the riddle of existence without some suggested answer. Whether these delicate books will live I do not know; but it is certain that few recent American novelists have shown so uniform an average of attainment in thought and art, or have thrown upon the quaintly real such new tints of ideal light.

What is to be understood by the term "realistic," as applied to the method of some later American writers of fiction? Defoe was an early realist; he so clothed fiction in the garb of truth, in his "Robinson Crusoe," "Strange Apparition of Mrs. Veal," and other writings, as to deceive the very elect, and to interest the reading public as few writers have ever done. Fielding, too, was a realist, in that he described low life as he saw it, and turned his back upon the academic traditions of his time. Goldsmith, in prose and verse,

painted certain classes of English and Irish society in real colors. Even Scott, with all his sentiment and romanticism and old-fashioned Toryism, cannot be called untrue to the soul of humanity, or unable to see and describe life in a real world. Dickens walked and talked with the London poor, familiarized himself with suburban and rural English life in many grades, and at least thought he described Americans as he had seen them. Thackeray mirrored certain parts of British society, and portrayed its shams and foibles, as well as the hearts of some true women and men, without essential exaggeration. Charlotte and Emily Brontë in Yorkshire, Blackmore in Devon and Somerset, George Eliot in rural England, may in justice be called realists, whatever their differences of method and style. Yet none of them would come under the application of the term as nowadays employed. It was their aim to be true; but they differed from the present transient school of "realists"—led at a distance by the finished and woe-begone Tourguéneff and the strong and individual Tolstoi—because they gave a greater place to sentiment, even though most of them shunned sentimentality.

What, then, is modern American realism? To attempt to define it may be easier than to define poetry or beauty, but it is not easy. For the purpose of the present study it may be sufficient to say that it stands without, not within; gives no evidence of personal sympathy; seldom indulges in reflections upon the narrative it offers; leaves

the reader to draw his own conclusions concerning right, wrong, progress, and remedy; describes by implication or by a minute rather than large characterization; is fond of detail; devotes itself chiefly to a limited and uninteresting set of tolerably intelligent people; makes much of transcontinental travel or international episodes and social exchanges; insists constantly upon the duty of portraying life as it is; and yet omits many of the most important factors in life's problem. It has been the most conspicuous, though not the most important, the most discussed, though by no means the most read, division or development of later American fiction; and its leader has been Mr. Henry James. This quiet innovator, without self-assertion or the use of adventitious aids to success, has at least entitled himself to a place in the limited list of those who have been influences in American literature. I remember reading, from the pen of some anonymous English critic, the statement that "American novelists almost give us (the English) lessons in careful elaboration of style, in reticence, and well-calculated effects." If this be true, the compliment—or rather its first two parts—belongs in some measure to a writer sometimes distinguished for careful elaboration of style and always for reticence, whatever his verbosity;—"the refraining to speak of that which is suggested."

Henry James, b. 1843.

Mr. James did not adopt at first the constructive method by which he is best known. The New York magazine called *The Galaxy*, now

dead, used to be his common vehicle of communication. Its earlier volumes contained many stories from his pen, which differed from the usual magazine work not so much in plot and in larger elaboration as in a certain neatness of finish and lack of intrusion on the writer's part. Some of his earlier work, printed in this or other magazines, has been abandoned by the author, but several stories are preserved in book form. In these, though the external style is sufficiently calm and cold, is an element which forbids them to be classified with Mr. James' later productions. There is more than a touch of romance in "A Passionate Pilgrim"; "The Last of the Valerii" is an essay toward the Hawthorne manner—with the usual result; "The Madonna of the Future" is an essentially humanitarian tale; and "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" is distinctly sensational. The prevalent note of the stories in Mr. James' first collection was not that of the realism now connected with his name. His earlier criticisms and descriptions of travel showed more of his later method than did his short stories. The influences of travel, of cosmopolitan culture, and of his instinctive calmness of mind, served to develop his final man-without-a-country manner. He needed no *ars est celare artem* motto, he simply followed his bent; and the soberer years of manhood naturally turned him from his essays toward the sensational and the romantic, though he never quite lost his humanitarian element, to which he occasionally yields.

It is not necessary to pass through the tolerably well-known list of Mr. James' books, reviewing each in minute detail. They are rather wearisomely numerous, and some of them, written after the first, show a lack of that literary finish which is supposed to be connected with his name. Of all his books "The Bostonians" is the best illustrative type: long, dull, and inconsequential, but mildly pleasing the reader, or at times quite delighting him, by a deliberate style which is enjoyable for its own sake, by a calm portraiture which represents the characters with silhouette-clearness, and by some very faithful and delicately humorous pictures of the life and scenery of Eastern Massachusetts. Its method is somewhat dreary and narrow, but is in its way sufficiently admirable.

Mr. James has three "manners": "The Passionate Pilgrim" book represents one; "Daisy Miller" the second; and "The Bostonians" the third. In "Daisy Miller" Mr. James depicts a characteristic American girl, from his own point of view. The picture is unattractive to those who, recognizing Daisy as a "type," refuse to regard her as a more prominent or representative type than Mr. Howells' "Lady of the Aroostook," Miss Jewett's "Country Doctor," or Mrs. Burnett's "Louisiana," to select three young women of equal self-reliance but greater sense. The novelette aroused, perhaps, a needless attention, since the author's method evidently was impartial, in his own view, and since he gave his

little heroine some attractive qualities, which may well enough be recommended for European imitation. The defect which the reader feels in this booklet, as in so much of Mr. James' work, does not relate to what is said, but rather to the author's apparent lack of heart or human interest in the matter. We may call Mr. James a faultless photographer, in the "Daisy Miller" class of his stories, but not an artist. He is, at best, a French painter in fiction, not a master in the older and larger and better manner. He has deliberately chosen his plan, and must pay the penalty while he receives the reward.

In his longer "international"—or, as they have been cleverly called, *émigré*—novels we recognize more clearly the artistic touch. "Roderick Hudson" and "The Portrait of a Lady" are the best of his longer stories, and "Confidence" is the poorest, but all are constructed on the same scheme,—the scheme first fully elaborated in his novelette of "Watch and Ward," published in 1872. Behind all his books stands the author, never more visible than the live man in Maelzel's automaton chess-player. There passes before him a procession of people; he notes and chronicles their characteristics, and he tells some of the things they say and do, with fewer of the things they think. These personages, men and women, are not knights, Pathfinders, dark mysterious villains, dazzling beauties, or damsels forlorn, subjected to plot and intrigue; nor are they melodramatic creatures of the Nancy Sykes order.

Mr. James describes commonplace people of the better kind; and though they feel, and act, and are acted upon, their environment is irreproachable. Seldom does he seem to be working toward a definite result in his books, though most of them have what may in a sense be called a moral. A part of the *outside* of the complex life of the last quarter of the nineteenth century is his theme: he delineates it, and he analyzes and sub-analyzes; but that is all. If it be true that he is preëminently the American novelist who represents "life" and reality, without artificial idealism in adornment, then life nowadays is a sadly shrunken and shrivelled thing, cold, thin and incomplete.

Later American prose has been distinctly broadened and enriched by the work of William Dean Howells. Of Ohio birth, and thoroughly American in his fresh, self-reliant, alert, observant, and optimistic tone of mind, Howells has strengthened his natural powers by a wise assimilation of the results of study, travel, and European residence. In his broad field of work he has shown his ready acceptance of the national necessity—or temptation—to do many things: he has been editor, critic, traveller, comedian, novelist, poet, and even (like Hawthorne) a writer of the "campaign biographies" called forth by the demands of American quadrennial politics. But his novels, in number and importance, have overshadowed his readable biographies of Presidents Lincoln and Hayes; his incisive, witty, or too swiftly laudatory reviews of

William Dean Howells, b. 1837.

fiction and poetry in America, England, Italy, and Russia; his graceful but relatively unimportant verse, dominated and saddened by the influence of Heine; and his serene sketches of life in Italian Venice or American Cambridge, the scenes and characters of which he has illumined by the lambent light of a humor which not seldom recalls the pleasure the masters give.

Howells' stories and novels are American in scene, in portraiture, and in spirit. In "Their Wedding Journey," "A Chance Acquaintance," and "A Foregone Conclusion" he fairly entitled himself, by his freshness, faithfulness, and wholesome humor of description, to be called the most successful literary painter of contemporary American life in the better classes. His field was somewhat limited; he did not essay to treat of noble tragedy or utter pathos; of inexorable necessity or glowing romance; but within that field his success was manifest and his method was his own. After the publication of "The Lady of the Aroostook" (1879) and "The Undiscovered Country" (1880), the one a fine portrait of a true and womanly girl and the other an interesting study of some phases of New England "Spiritualism," Howells distinctly changed his manner and manifestly fell under the influence of Henry James, his junior in years and certainly not his superior in ability, reputation, or mastery of style. This change was clearly for the worse. Henceforth Howells, though never becoming indifferent to the deeper truths of life, was to be ranked with

the new-realists. The stories, he said, had all been told; therefore he presented passionless and elaborately minute studies of certain types—characteristic in their way, but non-significant—of New England men and women. With keenness and clearness of vision, and with the humor which is a part of his nature, he simply told his readers what he had seen and heard. The telling would have been faultless had the subjects been representative. By perpetually portraying a part of life, and that not the most significant, this painstaking realist has produced an unreal effect.

Of the books in Howells' later manner "A Modern Instance" is the strongest; it is Howells' representative novel, as "The Bostonians" is James' masterpiece. The men and women, boys and girls, and winter life and landscape of a typical New England village are delineated with a fidelity that would be perfect were it not that the heart and soul of New England are almost out of sight. "A Modern Instance," placed beside "The Biglow Papers," "Snow-Bound," or "The House of the Seven Gables"—all three of them minutely realistic—almost seems an artistic falsehood. Its separate elements are true, but its whole is misleading. Howells returns again and again to the porch or the heap of builders' débris, but shuts his eyes to the skyward cathedral.

> "What parts, what gems, what colors shine,—
> Ah, but I miss the grand design."

The influence of the two chief American real-

ists, and of their European prototypes, has of course affected some of the younger novelists in the United States. Occasionally one of them has devoted himself to realism pure and simple; others, with a more or less romantic motive, have followed the general method of cold and unimpassioned delineation; and still others have only employed the realists' international plan. On the whole, however, the smaller American fiction, as well as the larger, seeks to portray the ideal in the real, not the real without the ideal. A finer and truer art is demanded in this attempt. It would be a sorry day for fiction if it turned its back on life and truth, in a chase after mere romance or invention. Life was field enough for Shakespeare, and ought to be for nineteenth century novelists. But Shakespeare did not forget the romantic, the ideal, and even the supernatural in his treatment of human life, which was far indeed from that of Tolstoi or Tourguéneff. What is the life that the novelist is to describe? Is it action, movement, story? or is it existence, attitude, pictorial representation? Again, which is the more important, the thing told or the way of telling it? The former; because all art is grounded on the necessity that the subject should have some reason for existence and delineation. Last of all, what is life itself? The career of upward-moving souls, answers the chorus of the world's greatest authors, in fiction as in every other department of literature. Man always has been and always will be a creature of ambition,

hope, love, enthusiasm, and the idea of duty; thus only, by rectitude and hope, can he explain the mystery of life, and look forward with confidence to "the long day of eternity."

Midway between the realists and the romanticists of later days stands Arthur Sherburne Hardy, whose "But Yet a Woman" (1883), like the realistic novels, presents an effective contrast to the representative books of preceding American fashions in fiction, with their dark and sombre scenes, their stirring melodramatic adventures, their commonplace sentimentalism, their gentle aspirations, or their bursts of bitter tears. "But Yet a Woman" is a characteristic novel that could not have been written save in the later, maturer, and quieter days of fiction in the United States. Its characters, as usual in the novels of the day, are few, and its tone is almost quietistic. Yet the lives and hearts it brings before us are far from being those superficially and hence imperfectly presented in the pages of the ordinary realistic and impassive novel. The author's sympathy is shown, and the reader's sympathy is tacitly asked, for things significantly vital and deeply human. The novel endeavors to be, in some sort, a "criticism of life"; indeed, its chief merit is to be found in the aphorisms and pithy sayings with which it abounds. It would be the thoughtful reader's companion, and not merely his stimulant or amusement.

A further reaction from realism, in England

and America, has produced in recent years a large number of stories, long and short, which have ranged from highly-colored oriental or even African romance to sensational novels of intricate crime, clever detection, and ultimate punishment. Of these stories it may be said, in Tennyson's phrase, that "some are pretty enough, and some are poor indeed." At one extreme, in England, stands "The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," a valuable addition to the select division of English fiction; at the other, certain improbable, loosely-constructed, and even ungrammatical romances not worth mention. But in speaking of this reaction, let us not forget that "realism" has never affected more than a somewhat limited minority of novel-readers, in England or America. In the former the sway of Dickens, the prose poet and master-mind, is still undiminished; in the latter, where Dickens is no less potent, the many have been stirred to flame by "Uncle Tom's Cabin," or have eagerly bought, for political reasons, tens of thousands of the novels portraying scenes in the "reconstruction period" of the Southern States. Their highest favorite is a writer who, beginning with a story of the great Chicago fire of 1871, gave them a long series of tales in which the humanitarian, the domestic, and the sensational elements were combined in what proved to be the desired proportion. Meanwhile two hundred thousand copies of "Ben-Hur, a Tale of the Christ" have been distributed among pleased readers,

to whom its religious suggestions and its occasionally vivid pictures have been most welcome, though the construction and—to me at least—dull literary style are of the amateur rather than the true historical novelist. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" will always be a historical landmark in American literature; the literary future of the other books just mentioned is of very insecure promise; nor can mere popular favor, so thoughtless and so ephemeral, be elevated into a critical judgment. But it is plain that, in America at least, literary agnosticism will be received with no more favor than religious; and that American literature will not chiefly be influenced by books in which

"The heart somehow seems all squeezed out by the mind."

English literature has long made a clear distinction between the story or short tale, whether romantic or natural; the novel or long story, dealing with passions and experiences not essentially improbable; and the romance, in which the action or the study of character is more ideal, imaginary, unusual, improbable, picturesque, or tinged with the supernatural. Other languages make a similar distinction, in varying methods of nomenclature. In American fiction, as elsewhere, the boundaries of the three divisions are not clearly defined. Brown's "novels" are essentially romances; there is a romantic element in Cooper; and Poe's "tales" are little romances. But it is plain enough, in the general view, that

Irving wrote stories, Cooper novels, and Poe and Hawthorne tales or romances. The conscious humor in Irving's stories minimizes the romantic element. In later fiction there is of course an obvious difference between Deming or Miss Murfree and Crawford or Julian Hawthorne. Through the works of Brown, Judd, Cooke, Winthrop, Cable, there runs a glittering thread of romance, visible even, as we have seen, in some of the earlier work of Henry James. Fitz-James O'Brien, a brilliant young Irish son of fortune, killed in the first year of the civil war, showed in his remarkable story called "The Diamond Lens" how a minute realism, the most rigid art, and a seemingly unfettered imagination could combine to produce a valuable and original result within no more than thirty pages. A more thrifty man-of-letters would have elaborated the idea in a long romance. But the prodigality of American literature has in it something regal as well as something wasteful; and nowhere has its wealth been more manifest than in the tales of three of our greater, and some few of our lesser, writers of fiction. Occasionally an author of no higher rank than Harriet Prescott Spofford, by the very carelessness of opulence, apparently throws away renown. Her earliest volumes, "Sir Rohan's Ghost," "The Amber Gods and Other Stories," "Azarian," displayed to American readers a romantic element of unwonted luxuriance and ostentatious wealth. The stories in the "Amber Gods" volume in particular, were fairly resplen-

Fitz-James O'Brien, 1829–1862.

dent in color, rich in tone, and oriental in perfume—"and all Arabia breathes from yonder box." "The Amber Gods" and "Midsummer and May" are something more than curiosities in American literature. The author's later work has not fulfilled her early promise nor added to her fame; the ready magazine-market for common love-stories has tempted her pen to easier toils and less exhilarating or exhausting mental states; it may be that the books of her youth now seem to their writer—as indeed they sometimes are—altogether careless and extravagant. But the irregular dramatic fire of these individual tales has not burned itself away in a quarter of a century; and there is still a place—however far below the highest place—in our literature for "the complete incarnation of light, full, bounteous, overflowing"; "attars and extracts that snatch your soul off your lips"; or the "little Spanish masque, to which kings and queens have once listened in courtly state, and which now unrolls its resplendent pageant before the eyes of Mrs. Laudersdale, translating her, as it were, into another planet, where familiar faces in pompous entablature look out upon her from a whirl of light and color, and familiar voices utter stately sentences in some honeyed unknown tongue." Not often appears a writer capable of describing the effect of tone-color in eight words like these: "*the instrument seemed to diffuse a purple cloud;*" but in fiction and in life there is in very truth

Harriet Elizabeth (Prescott) Spofford, b. 1835.

"A tone
Of some world far from ours,
Where music and moonlight and feeling
Are one."

The romantic tone occasionally marks some single book among the many boasting of no more than ordinary success. From the hurried international experiments of Francis Marion Crawford, ranging from an unfamiliar "Mr. Isaacs" in languid modern India to an impossible "American Politician" at home, there emerges the noble figure of "Zoroaster," surrounded by a Persian environment of dramatic scenes. Here are somewhat of the swift carelessness of mere romance and somewhat of the effective force of restrained art. Another writer, turning from pretty little unimportant village love-stories of New England, portrays in "Guenn" a nobly pathetic picture of the hopeless love of a Breton peasant maiden for a painter innocently oblivious of the life-ruin he is making. To the smaller novelists as well as the greater there sometimes comes that ideal vision, that clearer insight, which peers to depths and heights of life unseen before. If the thought and the power be those of romance, the resulting life-picture need not be less true because less commonplace or familiar.

Francis Marion Crawford, b. 1854.

Blanche Willis Howard, b. 1847

Such life-pictures are not hard to find in the tales, novels, and romances of the younger Hawthorne. Over his broad field hang both European and American skies, but they are not seldom

illumined by "the light that never was on sea or land." Internationalism, in his method, is but a convenience in the portrayal of minor character; it is not a mere matter of external amusement. "Analysis" he reserves for such essays as those printed in "Saxon Studies"; soul he deems a thing somewhat deeper than may be shown by mere study of attitude or lesser act. His studies in stories are of life, not of society; and he prefers to create rather than to record. The soul and its struggles, deep sin and grim inexorable penalty, inner loveliness and spiritual triumph, are his higher themes; and though he occasionally writes some compact tale of mere crime and discovery, he usually turns to subjects far more intricate and psychological. His lighter tales are long-removed from the intense romance called "Sinfire" or the original creation of "Archibald Malmaison"; yet even in the former there sometimes appears the romancer's profound impression of the depth and half-guessed meaning of the mystery of life, and his constant search for some utterance of that impression.

Julian Hawthorne, b. 1846.

The careless opulence of which I have just spoken, as a sign of the strength and the weakness of later American fiction, finds no better illustration than in Julian Hawthorne's books. They crowd upon each other in their rapid appearance; their construction and language are too often so faulty that they almost seem wayward; and now and then the figures are blurred upon

the mental retina. "Archibald Malmaison" seems to me the most original and the strongest of the author's books, a remarkable example of the romance pure and simple; yet even here, where the elaboration of the peculiar plot demands the utmost nicety, are occasional signs of haste. Julian Hawthorne has not yet applied to fiction the constructive art and the gravely decorative detail which make his "Nathaniel Hawthorne and his Wife" the best biography written in America. In "Sebastian Strome," which is not unable to endure mention beside "Adam Bede," of which it is a sort of unintentional counterpart, the author shows his most sustained strength. I prefer, however, to find in the general, rather than the particular, those qualities which led a living critic*—a critic thoroughly familiar with the work of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe—to declare that Julian Hawthorne "is clearly and easily the first of living romancers."

None knows better than Mr. Hawthorne himself the perilousness of so confident a statement as this. But it is certain that his published books display the originality and power of genius. Their general purpose and literary trend, their unswerving idea, whatever their irregularity of theme and merit, may fairly be summed up in these words from a critical essay by Mr. Hawthorne, written of course without the slightest autobiographic intent:

* Richard Henry Stoddard.

The heterogeneous mass of material phenomena is destitute of order, proportion and purpose, and in their unregenerate state these phenomena are and must remain unavailable for a work of art. Only after the mind of the artist has impressed its form upon them, moulding them to its image, choosing the good and rejecting the bad, vindicating them and vitalizing them with its overruling purpose, can the facts and circumstances of the physical world become fit to assume their station in the immortal temple of art. . . . . You cannot bind a human mind with iron fetters, and the laws which control fixed matter cannot be applied to the regulation of free spirit. . . . . To what end is this royal gift of imagination bestowed upon the race? Is it to chronicle small-beer, which speaks sufficiently for itself? or shall it be applied to the creation of an "Iliad," a "Divine Comedy," a "Hamlet," a "Paradise Lost?" Is it better to show the seamstress and the dry-goods clerk an elaborate imitation of their own petty existence and contracted ambition? or to thrill a nation with a grand romance and elevate a generation with a sublime poem? If we have any Horace Walpoles, any Chesterfields, any Boswells among us, let them appeal to us as students of manners and biography and they shall receive their due welcome and recognition; but why should they assume the tones and the titles which have been made reverend by Shakespeare, Fielding and Balzac? A work of art should partake of realism only as to its substance; in its design it should be not realistic, but ideal. . . . . The idealists should draw their materials from the accumulations of science, and the realists should forbear the attempt to carry physical law into metaphysical regions. The value of fiction lies in the fact that it can give us what actual existence cannot; that it can resume in a chapter the conclusions of a lifetime; that it can omit the trivial, the vague, the redundant, and select the significant, the forcible and the characteristic; that it can satisfy expectation, expose error and vindicate human nature. Life, as we experience it, is too vast, its relations are too complicated, its orbit too comprehensive, ever to give us the impression of individual completeness and justice; but the intuition of these things, though denied to sense, is granted to

faith, and we are authorized to embody that interior conviction in romance. Everything is free to the imagination, provided only—as a great imaginative writer has said—it do not "swerve aside from the truth of the human heart." And stories of imagination are truer than transcripts of fact, because they include or postulate these, and give a picture not only of the earth beneath our feet, but of the sky above us, of the hope and freshness of the morning, of the mystery and magic of the night. They draw the complete circle, instead of mistrustfully confining themselves to the lower arc.

Moral struggle and spiritual aspiration, as portrayed by the majority of later American novelists, have for the most part been shown in limited fields, in separated or imperfect types. Not often does a romancer or story-maker essay the largest manner or the highest reach of thought. But in their seeming narrowness these lesser novelists but follow life, wherein the petty struggle and the common home are environed by all the broadening spheres of the universe. The highest thought may be born of what seems the meanest brain. The writer, too, may find a universal lesson in the narrow fact. Not yet, aside from the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, have the problems of life been broadly spread upon the pages of our fiction. But a writer so studiously and narrowly realistic as Edward Everett Hale finds no clod too mean on which to stand while his eager eyes turn with the upward look. His sketch of "A Man without a Country" is a word-token of all that humanity has ever connected with the idea of patriotism; and his simple and almost rollicking novelette "Ten Times One

Edward Everett Hale, b. 1822.

is Ten" outlines no smaller scheme than the regeneration of a world by means wholly practical. It is no wonder that the lessons of Hale's "Ten Times One is Ten" and "In His Name," with their optimism and cheery helpfulness, have been caught up here and there by many a "Harry Wadsworth Club," "Look-up Legion," or "King's Daughters" society. This is proper Americanism in the closing years of the century—the father's gift and the son's duty:

> "To look up and not down,
> To look forward and not back,
> To look out and not in,—and
> To lend a hand."

When such thoughts are embodied in books the thoughts, at least, cannot die. The life of books and authors is of minor importance.

Some of the writers whom I have named may do better work than they have hitherto done, and others may do worse; the field of fiction will be occupied by new figures; literary fashions will change; art will ever be followed, and will be brought to higher developments; but in novels as in life the coming world of readers will ask not only *whence* but *whither*, not only *how* but *why*. Whether or not the "great American novel" will ever be written is an unimportant question. But if it be, it will spring from the character which has made the nation in the past, and which must be its future reliance.

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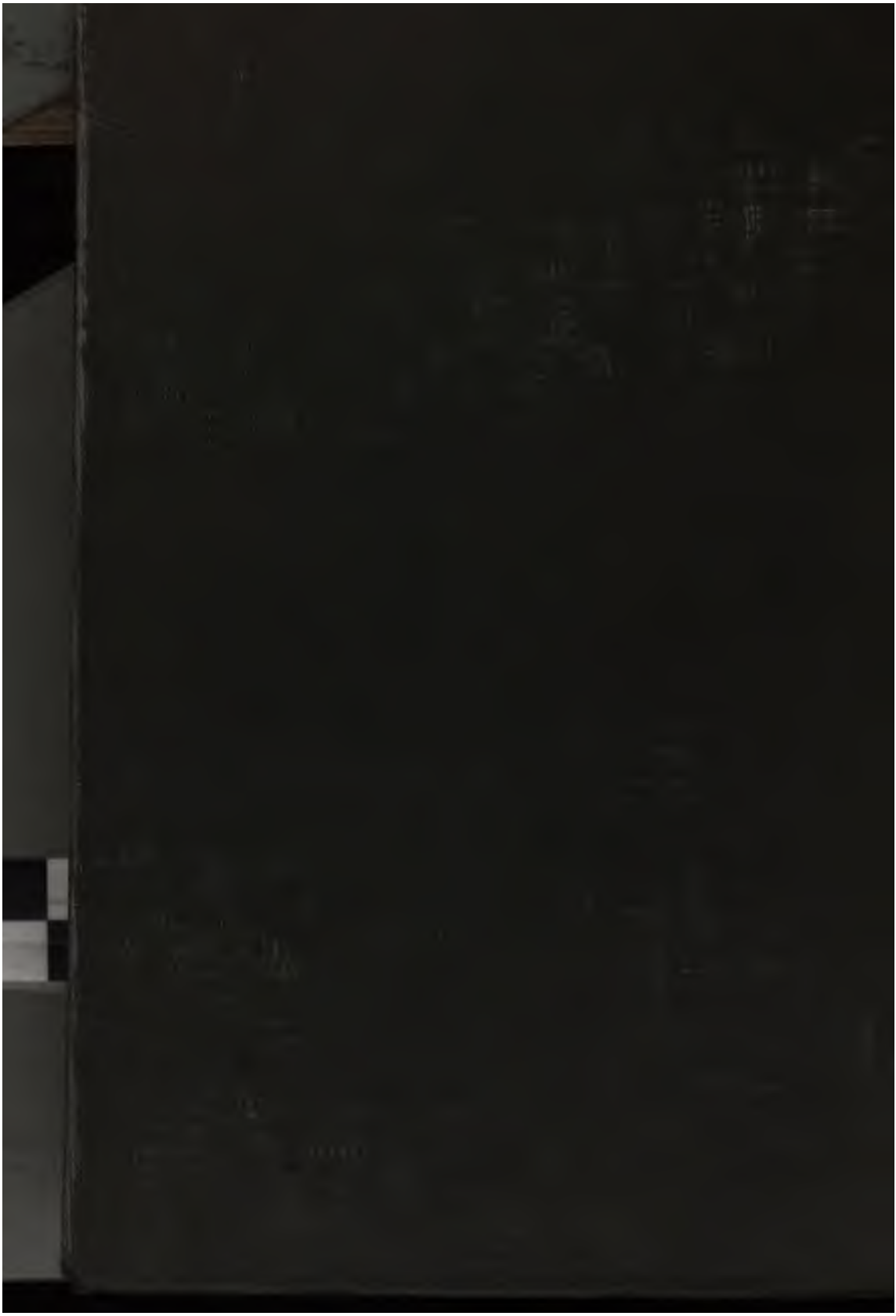
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